

# The Last Light Below



*Dungeon Master's edition*

Mara Quill meets the characters beside a wagon of blankets and climbing gear at the crack in Cairn Hill.

## OPENING READ-ALoud

A pale seam runs across the hillside, wide enough to expose a flight of stone steps. Lamps flicker far below it: three flashes, darkness, three flashes. Beside a wagon, a woman tightens the straps on an empty stretcher. Dust puffs from the opening. A voice rises through the crack: "The beam's moving again."

## Credits

**Adventure and publication credit:** bandolek.

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**Rules basis:** D&D fifth edition, SRD 5.1, using the 2014 rules. The rescue clock, constructs, special equipment procedures, lens controls, and accomplishment awards are homebrew created for this adventure.

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## Overview

A hillside has split open above an abandoned observatory. Its buried lamps are flashing a distress signal, and six members of a survey team remain underground. The instrument they awakened can locate the beacon of a missing expedition—but its failing gravity lens is pulling the lower galleries apart.

The characters must bring the surveyors out, learn how the observatory works, and decide whether to attempt its last observation.

**System:** D&D fifth edition, SRD 5.1, using the 2014 rules.

**Party:** Four 3rd-level characters.

**Playing time:** Approximately 3-4 hours.

**Structure:** Six encounters combining rescue, exploration, negotiation, and a potentially violent finale. Two encounters contain constructs that can be fought, deceived, disabled, or avoided.

**Primary objective:** Recover the six surveyors.

**Secondary choices:** Preserve the observatory, recover its final observation, or destroy the dangerous lens.

**Tone:** Buried wonder, practical courage, strained loyalties, and visible danger.

**Content considerations:** Entrapment, falling debris, injured people, unstable heights, and missing relatives. Starting injuries need not be described graphically.

All characters, places, and organizations are original; no surrounding campaign history is assumed. The machinery, rescue procedures, clock, and construct statistics are homebrew.

## DM Introduction

The observatory beneath Cairn Hill compares distant beacon signals through a gravity lens that bends light along calibrated paths. Astronomer Sera Venn recognized the beacon carried by her missing brother Orin's expedition and powered the lens before securing its damaged cradle. The unsecured lens now shifts its weight through the building, tearing braces loose and briefly making people and objects lighter. The beacon is transmitting from an isolated ledge eight miles north.

Rescue leader Mara Quill has brought the characters to the exposed entrance because her two surface attendants cannot safely recover the six surveyors below. Jori is pinned in the entry hall, Tovin shelters in the workshop, Iven is trapped in the archive, Pell is stranded in the hoist cage, and Sera tends the injured Ena in the lower vestibule. Mara wants them out immediately. Sera agrees, but hopes a final observation will also provide a rescue destination for her brother's expedition. She caused the crisis through haste and accepts responsibility; neither woman intends to endanger the rescuers.

The western stair connects all three occupied levels. The eastern hoist and service ladder offer another route, and

repairing the hoist can ease evacuation. Two archive skitters protect calibration equipment; two lens wardens guard the energized lens. Maintenance procedures can prevent both fights. The archive diagram, lower doorway inscription, control labels, and Sera independently explain the shutdown.

The eight-segment clock tracks the deterioration. An unsecured cage falls at segment 6; at segment 8, the lens begins a three-round rupture countdown. Closing the shutter, holding the bleed, and seating the cradle safely stops the lens. Destruction also ends the danger, but releases a damaging pulse. Before either ending, the party may attempt a three-round observation to record the beacon's location. Rupture destroys only the lens chamber, leaving routes for a later rescue. A stopped lens stays stopped; pursuing the missing expedition is a separate, optional undertaking.

## At a Glance

| QUESTION                                | ANSWER                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Who hires the characters?               | Mara Quill, rescue leader for the Cairn Survey Cooperative.                                                                                            |
| Why are the characters needed?          | Mara has two surface attendants, no spare underground team, and six missing surveyors.                                                                 |
| What caused the crisis?                 | Sera powered the lens while its cradle was unsecured.                                                                                                  |
| What is the clock?                      | Eight ten-minute segments, beginning when the first character enters U1.                                                                               |
| What advances it?                       | Fictional time underground; starting the final observation also adds ten minutes once.                                                                 |
| What pauses or stops it?                | Holding the bleed with the shutter closed pauses it. Seating the cradle or destroying the lens stops it. See Safe Shutdown and Deliberate Destruction. |
| How many opponents exist?               | Two archive skitters and two lens wardens, with no replacements.                                                                                       |
| What information is essential?          | The six-person roster, both vertical routes, and the shutdown sequence.                                                                                |
| Can the characters leave?               | Yes; an active, unpaused clock continues.                                                                                                              |
| Is a rest assumed?                      | No. The intended party begins reasonably rested.                                                                                                       |
| What is the maximum listed reward?      | 300 gp in cooperative payments plus 60 gp of authorized salvage, for the party.                                                                        |
| Must the missing expedition be pursued? | No.                                                                                                                                                    |

## First-Session Guide

Before play, choose the party's connection: hired rescuers, nearby travelers with useful skills, or adventurers known to the cooperative. All receive the same contract. Agree on how directly to describe injuries and falls.

Prepare a visible eight-segment track and explain that it measures fictional time underground, not table discussion. Display the six names; check a name only when that person reaches the surface.

Open at the hillside and provide the contract, roster, and supplied equipment while Mara's attendants fit packs and inspect ropes. Make the beam's supports and bypass visible in the first rescue. Give the archive diagram when acquired, allowing the players to consider the lens before meeting Sera. Her later request for an observation can be refused.

## Hook

Mara Quill meets the characters beside a wagon of blankets and climbing gear at the crack in Cairn Hill.

"Six below. One lens making the hill shake. I can pay you to bring them out, and I can tell you exactly who you're looking for."

She offers **200 gp for a complete rescue accounting: 40 gp now and 160 gp after the expedition.** The cooperative adds **10 gp per surveyor delivered alive to the surface, up to 60 gp, and 40 gp for a readable final beacon record.** All payments are for the party.

A complete accounting identifies the fate or last verified position of all six surveyors and honestly reports the lens's condition. The base payment does not require every rescue to succeed.

The rescue chest holds the full **300 gp** potentially owed, drawn from members' pooled emergency dues. Mara controls its key.

She loans two 50-foot rescue ropes, two harnesses, four pitons, a hammer, a crowbar, a hooded lantern with six hours of oil, and a folding stretcher.

## Stakes

The party's choices determine:

- **The surveyors' survival and injuries.** A rescue is complete when the person reaches the surface.
- **The observatory's condition.** Safe shutdown preserves it; destruction sacrifices its unique optical element; rupture buries the chamber.
- **The expedition's location.** A completed observation supplies a bearing, distance, and recognizable landing site.
- **The cooperative's future work.** An intact observatory permits careful research; a ruined chamber becomes a documented, sealed hazard.
- **Trust between Mara and Sera.** Honest disclosure and shared decisions can preserve their working relationship even without the observation.

The expedition is elsewhere, beyond this adventure's rescue site. Its beacon shows recent manual operation, not the number or health of its members.

## What the Characters Know at the Entrance

Mara freely provides these facts:

- Six surveyors entered that morning.
- The first strong tremor occurred about twenty minutes ago; the distress lamps began immediately afterward.
- Sera believes the instrument detected a missing expedition.
- The surveyors brought no explosives and expected no hostile creatures.
- The existing stair should connect all three occupied levels.
- The cooperative's partial survey shows a freight hoist.

Mara does not know the shutdown sequence, individual surveyor locations, or exact time remaining. The visible clock represents signs of deterioration the characters can assess, not a prediction she can give them.

## Factions

### The Cairn Survey Cooperative

**Representative:** Mara Quill.

**Goal:** Recover its people, document the danger, and prevent further casualties.

**Leverage:** Rescue funds, equipment, professional credibility, and control of future authorized access.

**Fear:** That excitement over the discovery will turn preventable injuries into deaths.

This small association of surveyors, instrument makers, and route assessors maintains a dedicated emergency fund. It cannot finance an army or replace the observatory.

Mara prefers safe shutdown when the party can explain a credible procedure, but accepts necessary destruction. As each surveyor reaches S0, she arranges care, updates the roster, and asks what help is still needed below.

Deliberately false accounting or concealed theft ends cooperative support. Honest disagreement over the lens does not.

### Sera's Beacon Search

**Representative:** Sera Venn.

**Goal:** Locate the expedition carrying her brother Orin's beacon.

**Leverage:** Instrument knowledge, the beacon signature, and observation settings.

**Fear:** Losing a rescue opportunity for the expedition.

Several expedition families support Sera's search. She has no armed followers or additional immediate reward money.

Sera first explains what she hoped to achieve, but a direct question gets a direct answer: she energized the lens before locking its cradle. She helps secure the surveyors without bargaining for an observation. If the party agrees to a reading, she supplies settings and obeys its abort condition.

If refused, she argues once, grieves, and leaves. She never secretly restarts a stopped lens.

The Observatory's Custodial System

**Representatives:** Two archive skitters and two lens wardens.

**Goal:** Protect calibrated equipment and energized controls.

**Leverage:** Access denial and limited physical force.

**Limitation:** Literal instructions, damaged coordination, and no strategic intelligence.

The constructs recognize maintenance tokens, stowed instruments, and control states. They are not fully conversational. Their lenses change color before hostility, and standby is visibly apparent.

The two pairs follow different assignments; pacifying one does not control the other. Use **Pacifying the Skitters** and **Maintenance Standby for the Wardens**. Disabled or destroyed units are never replaced.

People to Bring Home

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Jori Bell, route surveyor</p> <p><b>STARTING LOCATION:</b> U1, beneath the beam</p> <p><b>CONDITION:</b> Pinned, otherwise stable</p> <p><b>CAN MOVE UNAIDED?:</b> After release, speed 20 feet</p> <p><b>USEFUL KNOWLEDGE:</b> Workshop occupied; stair continuous</p>    |
| <p>Tovin Rusk, instrument fitter</p> <p><b>STARTING LOCATION:</b> U2, supply alcove</p> <p><b>CONDITION:</b> Dislocated shoulder already supported</p> <p><b>CAN MOVE UNAIDED?:</b> Yes, speed 30 feet</p> <p><b>USEFUL KNOWLEDGE:</b> Maintenance tokens and rescue reel</p> |
| <p>Iven Darr, archivist</p> <p><b>STARTING LOCATION:</b> M2, behind fallen cabinet</p> <p><b>CONDITION:</b> Bruised and trapped</p> <p><b>CAN MOVE UNAIDED?:</b> After release, speed 30 feet</p> <p><b>USEFUL KNOWLEDGE:</b> Shutdown diagram</p>                            |
| <p>Pell Fen, hoist operator</p> <p><b>STARTING LOCATION:</b> M3, inside cage</p> <p><b>CONDITION:</b> Unhurt, stranded</p>                                                                                                                                                    |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>CAN MOVE UNAIDED?:</b> After reaching a landing</p> <p><b>USEFUL KNOWLEDGE:</b> Hoist securing and operation</p>                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Sera Venn, astronomer</p> <p><b>STARTING LOCATION:</b> L1</p> <p><b>CONDITION:</b> Unhurt, exhausted</p> <p><b>CAN MOVE UNAIDED?:</b> Yes, speed 30 feet</p> <p><b>USEFUL KNOWLEDGE:</b> Shutdown and observation procedures</p>                                   |
| <p>Ena Sol, observer</p> <p><b>STARTING LOCATION:</b> L1, on folded coat</p> <p><b>CONDITION:</b> Sprained ankle, no mortal wound</p> <p><b>CAN MOVE UNAIDED?:</b> Speed 10 feet; 20 with one helper</p> <p><b>USEFUL KNOWLEDGE:</b> Controls Sera left unsecured</p> |

All six begin alive with **7 maximum hit points**. Jori starts at 5/7, Ena at 4/7, and the others at 7/7. Use the full **Surveyor** profile in **Rules Reference** if needed.

Healing that restores at least 1 hit point removes Ena's movement penalty and Jori's post-rescue movement penalty. It does not release Jori from the beam or Iven from the furniture.

Mara Quill

Mara wears a red scarf tied close so it cannot catch on equipment. She checks knots while speaking.

**Immediate want:** A rescue plan with names attached to it.

**Fear:** Sending another team into a situation nobody understands.

**Voice:** "Who's carrying Ena? Which way are you bringing her?"

**Offers:** The contract, loaned equipment, surface care, and two attendants to receive evacuees.

**Knows:** The survey's purpose, all six people, and Sera's connection to the expedition. She knew Sera hoped to find the beacon but did not authorize restarting unstable machinery.

Mara stays outside to manage casualties, funds, and attendants. After the lens stops, she will enter freely. Before then, she will help with a specific short carry to U1 if one attendant remains outside; she does not become a combat companion.

Sera Venn

Sera's sleeves are rolled unevenly. Graphite covers one thumb, and she repeatedly checks a small brass watch.

**Immediate want:** Get Ena moving, then ask for one final observation.

**Fear:** Telling the expedition families she destroyed their only usable lead.

**Voice:** "Three readings. I need three. After that, you can close it."

**Offers:** Technical cooperation, beacon settings, and permission to take the listed salvage.

**Knows:** The lens sequence and recorder drawer.

**Initially avoids saying:** She heard the cradle alarm and continued long enough to confirm the signature.

Help earns candor. Threats make her terse, not violent. A promise to investigate the expedition's last known route matters to her but is never required for cooperation.

The Other Surveyors

**Jori** wants the beam secured before anyone pulls him. He names structural features as if introducing acquaintances: "That ugly bracket's still doing its job." Once free, he can describe both stair flights and lend his survey pole.

**Tovin** wants his tools carried out first only if the people can already walk. He jokes when frightened, then becomes embarrassed. He recognizes the skitters' blue maintenance response.

**Iven** wants his annotated diagram preserved. He whispers while searching for words, then delivers a complete sentence at surprising volume. He knows the archive's order, but not the beacon settings.

**Pell** wants a second rope on the cage before anyone touches its brake. He speaks in load estimates and refuses overloads. After the travel repair and rigging, he can operate the U3 winch while separate tenders manage backup lines.

**Ena** wants Sera to stop deciding alone. She speaks gently but names the disputed fact: "You said the cradle could wait." She can confirm the shutdown sequence without the archive document.

None attacks the party over an argument. They may refuse an unsafe carry, ask for an explanation, or suggest a better technique.

Running Time and Pressure

Table-Time Budget

| PORTION                       | TYPICAL TABLE TIME | TYPICAL FICTIONAL TIME |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Opening, contract, equipment  | 10 minutes         | Before clock starts    |
| Scene 1: Entrance rescue      | 15-20 minutes      | 5-10 minutes           |
| Scene 2: Workshop preparation | 15-20 minutes      | 5-10 minutes           |
| Scene 3: Archive and skitters | 25-35 minutes      | 10-15 minutes          |
| Scene 4: Hoist rescue         | 20-30 minutes      | 5-10 minutes           |

| PORTION                  | TYPICAL TABLE TIME | TYPICAL FICTIONAL TIME                             |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Scene 5: Sera and Ena    | 20-25 minutes      | 5-10 minutes                                       |
| Scene 6: Lens decision   | 35-45 minutes      | 1-10 minutes, plus observation surcharge if chosen |
| Evacuation and aftermath | 15-20 minutes      | 5-10 minutes                                       |
| Deliberation allowance   | 15-25 minutes      | Only in-character delay in danger                  |

A focused group can finish near three hours; fighting both construct pairs and debating the observation extensively brings play closer to four.

The Visible Rescue Clock

**Homebrew procedure:** Draw eight boxes, each representing ten minutes of fictional time after the first character enters U1. Keep a separate remainder of 0-9 minutes.

Count actual work, searches, travel, and in-character delays. Rules questions and map clarification do not consume fictional time.

- A five-minute task adds five minutes.
- Combat uses actual rounds: ten rounds equal one minute.
- A few spoken sentences do not automatically cost five minutes.
- Starting the final observation adds **ten minutes once**, immediately.
- No other action adds a segment unless its procedure says so.
- Safe shutdown or destruction ends the clock permanently.

Announce completed segments through visible changes. At segment 2, dust falls through the stairwell; at 4, loose objects slide toward L2; at 6, the hoist gives a sharp metallic report; at 7, the distress lamps glow continuously white.

Examining the lamps or rhythmic tremors for one minute reveals approximately how close the next threshold is, without a check.

Threshold Effects

| COMPLETED SEGMENTS | PERSISTENT CHANGE                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0-3                | All listed routes remain open.                                                                                                                  |
| 4                  | The M1-L1 stair flight becomes debris-strewn, doubling its movement cost until two creatures clear it in five minutes. The hoist is unaffected. |
| 6                  | An unsecured cage drops to L3. Use Cage-Drop Procedure.                                                                                         |

| COMPLETED SEGMENTS | PERSISTENT CHANGE                                                                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7                  | L2's gravity surge occurs every round instead of every second round while initiative is tracked. |
| 8                  | Begin the three-round Rupture Countdown.                                                         |

Thresholds occur once. Cleared debris stays cleared, a dropped cage stays down, and stopping the lens prevents thresholds not yet reached.

## Pausing the Clock

With the shutter closed, holding or rigging the bleed pauses the clock at its exact value, including an active rupture countdown. Use **Safe Shutdown - Hold the Bleed** for actions, hands, and rigging.

Releasing the valve resumes the clock; it does not remove debris, restore the cage, or reverse a collapse. Seating the cradle cancels the countdown permanently. Destruction also cancels it, after the break pulse resolves.

## Travel and Evacuation Time

Use tactical distances when seconds matter. Otherwise, these complete allowances include doors, landing checks, and ordinary equipment:

- Adjacent chambers on one level: **one minute**.
- Adjacent levels by western stair: **two minutes**, or **four minutes** across the debris-strewn M1-L1 flight.
- Adjacent levels by a secured, working hoist: **two minutes**, including boarding and unloading; see **Make the Hoist Usable**.
- U1 to surface: **two minutes**.
- Escorting Ena without healing: double these allowances unless she is on a stretcher.
- Stretcher with two bearers: normal allowances.
- An unencumbered character hurrying alone: halve allowances, rounded up; no careful inspection en route.

Do not add these times to tactical movement already counted for the same journey. Jori takes four minutes from U1 to the surface, alone or with Tovin, while his injury persists; after healing removes his movement penalty, use the normal two minutes. These complete allowances are not halved for hurrying.

## Useful Optional Cuts

- **Workshop:** Tovin has already gathered the tokens and reel; no search time is needed. The party still chooses what to carry and whether to escort him.
- **Archive:** A maintenance token presented before instruments are disturbed puts the skitters in standby immediately.
- **Hoist:** Pell has already threaded the safety eye. One character at M3 can secure it with a supplied rope in one minute.

• **Final preparations:** Sera explains the sequence while Ena's evacuation is arranged; charge the longer task, not both.

• **Warden fight:** Once the shutter closes, use **Maintenance Standby for the Wardens** while other characters continue shutdown.

These cuts do not free or evacuate anyone automatically. Pell and Iven remain on the roster until actually rescued.

## Locations

Three occupied levels connect by the western stair and eastern freight-hoist shaft. Each level has three chambers. **Map Specifications** governs tactical dimensions, anchors, and openings.

Record changes in the **Campaign-State Ledger**. Moved obstacles, removed equipment, injuries, evacuated people, and individual construct states persist on later visits.

## S0: Hillside Rescue Station

A wagon, rescue chest, canvas awning, and two attendants stand on firm ground outside the crack. The entrance stair is too narrow for attendants to carry the stretcher abreast, but its hinged poles permit a normal two-person carry.

S0 remains safe through every lens outcome. Tremors loosen dust near the opening but never swallow the station.

**People:** Mara, Cale, and Miri.

**Services:** Blankets, water, wound cleaning, roster updates, and equipment returns.

**Exit:** The road leaves Cairn Hill without another encounter.

## U1: Entry Hall

Jori lies beside the eastern end of a fallen crossbeam. A cracked, readable plaque shows a stair symbol north and a freight-cage symbol east.

The beam blocks the direct workshop route; a clear southern bypass permits passage. Scrapes mark Tovin's route through it.

**Rescue: Encounter 1: The Beam and the Voice.**

**Return state:** The beam retains its recorded supports and position.

## U2: Workshop

Brass frames, folded canvas, and measuring rods fill the room. Tovin shelters in the northwest alcove. Maintenance tokens, the rescue reel, and a tool wrap lie at the waist-high bench; two starspindles are fitted inside its frame. Lamps and labels are readable without a check.

**Equipment and clues: Encounter 2: Tools for People.**

**Return state:** Supplies do not replenish. Tovin's departure depends on his evacuation plan.

### U3: Upper Hoist Landing

A hand winch stands beside the shaft, above the cage's starting position at M3, twenty feet below. The suspension is frayed; fixed safety eyes are sound. The east-wall service ladder connects all three levels independently of the cage.

A load plate is readable here. Looking down reveals Pell if he remains inside.

**Hazard:** Premature winch use can drop the cage; see **Cage-Drop Procedure**.

### M1: Middle Stair Landing

A graphite line marks the surveyors' intended return route. Iven can be heard from M2 unless he has left; listening at the lower stair reveals Ena's cough in L1.

At segment 4, debris falls on the M1-L1 flight. The landing remains passable, and cleared debris does not fall again.

### M2: Archive

A fallen cabinet divides the northern room. Iven is trapped behind it within reach of the shutdown diagram's wall tube. Two skitters stand by calibration trays, guarding the instruments rather than him.

**Rescue, clues, and constructs:** **Encounter 3: The Archive That Objects**.

**Return state:** A moved cabinet stays moved. Standby skitters remain so unless deliberately reactivated.

### M3: Middle Hoist Landing

The cage begins level with M3 across a two-foot sill gap. Its gate is shut. Pell can reach it but cannot safely release the brake from inside.

A sound landing eye is visible beside the gate. The service ladder is reachable without boarding.

**Rescue:** **Encounter 4: A Cage on One Cable**.

**Pressure:** Segment 6 drops the cage unless adequately secured.

### L1: Lower Vestibule

Sera tends Ena, whose ankle rests on a folded coat. The door to L2 stands open unless closed.

An etched strip beside it depicts shutter, valve, and cradle and supplies the shutdown sequence; see **The Independent Control Clue** in **Encounter 5**.

**Return state:** Track departures, the coat, and Sera's chalk marks. Extended debate consumes time; brief procedural clarification does not.

### L2: Lens Chamber

The lens hangs within a central frame. Its shutter wheel is west, bleed lever southeast, and cradle pedal and bar southwest. The recorder stands against the north wall. Two wardens occupy marked recesses and remain within L2.

**Controls and hazards:** **Encounter 6: The Last Light**.

**Return state:** Safe shutdown leaves an inert lens; destruction leaves traversable wreckage; rupture leaves rubble and rescue voids.

### L3: Lower Hoist Landing

A stable landing surrounds the shaft's buffered well. A dropped cage rests here with its gate reachable from the landing. The buffers limit the fall but do not prevent injury.

L2 lies through the western corridor. If it collapses, that doorway blocks; the shaft ladder remains open upward.

## Map Specifications

The site uses a three-level floor plan and a vertical route diagram, each with separate DM and player views.

Coordinates are in feet. North is decreasing y; east is increasing x. Rectangles list west, north, east, south boundaries. Floors are at 0, -20, and -40 feet; S0 is at +20 feet.

Room boundaries describe interior floor space. Walls lie outside them, interrupted only by listed openings. Unlisted walls are solid stone.

### Map 1: Three-Level Observatory Plan

**Scale:** One square equals 5 feet.

**Display:** Three aligned level panels. Coordinates repeat; room keys distinguish levels.

**Grid extent per panel:** x = -5 to 95; y = -5 to 55.

**North:** Up the page.

#### Authoritative Room and Route Table

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>U1 / M1 / L1 western chambers</div> <div>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS: Rectangle (0,20)-(20,40)</div> <div>ELEVATION: 0 / -20 / -40</div> <div>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS: Each 20 × 20 feet. Northern stair openings and eastern corridor remain usable.</div> |
| <div>U2 workshop</div> <div>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS: Rectangle (30,20)-(60,40)</div> <div>ELEVATION: 0</div> <div>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS: 30 × 20 feet.</div>                                                                                               |
| <div>M2 archive</div> <div>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS: Rectangle (30,20)-(60,40)</div> <div>ELEVATION: -20</div> <div>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS: 30 × 20 feet.</div>                                                                                              |
| <div>L2 lens chamber</div> <div>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS: Rectangle (30,10)-(60,50)</div> <div>ELEVATION: -40</div>                                                                                                                                       |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> 30 × 40 feet.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Footprints (0,0)-(5,20) and (5,0)-(10,20)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p><b>U3 / M3 / L3 hoist chambers</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Rectangle (70,20)-(90,40)</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> 0 / -20 / -40</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> Each 20 × 20 feet, including shaft and landing.</p>            | <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Each 20-foot level change</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> Each flight costs 25 feet of movement and changes elevation 10 feet.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p><b>Western horizontal corridors</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Rectangle (20,25)-(30,35), each level</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Respective floor</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> 10 feet long, 10 feet wide.</p>                | <p><b>Stair turning landing</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Rectangle (0,-5)-(10,0)</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Halfway between floors</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> 10 feet of turning movement; total floor-to-floor route is 60 feet.</p>                                                                                                                 |
| <p><b>Eastern horizontal corridors</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Rectangle (60,25)-(70,35), each level</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Respective floor</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> 10 feet long, 10 feet wide.</p>                | <p><b>Surface connection</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Same stair construction, S0 to U1</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> +20 to 0</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> 60 feet of movement; exits onto firm hillside.</p>                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>Western corridor doorways</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> x = 20 and 30, y = 25-35</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Respective floor</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> 10-foot openings; open sliding doors at central-room ends.</p> | <p><b>Hoist shaft opening</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Rectangle (73,25)-(85,35)</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Continuous, 0 to -40</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> 12 feet east-west by 10 feet north-south. Landing ends at x = 73; guardrails except at the west loading approach.</p>                                                                     |
| <p><b>Eastern corridor doorways</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> x = 60 and 70, y = 25-35</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Respective floor</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> 10-foot openings; open sliding doors at central-room ends.</p> | <p><b>Hoist cage</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Rectangle (75,25)-(85,35)</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Initially -20</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> Full 10 × 10-foot platform; four Medium occupants maximum, subject to load limit.</p>                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Western stair enclosure</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Rectangle (0,-5)-(10,20)</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Between levels</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> Two 5-foot-wide switchback flights and turning landing.</p>        | <p><b>Hoist loading gate and sill</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Cage gate: x = 75, y = 25-35; sill: rectangle (73,25)-(75,35)</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Each landing</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> The 2-foot hinged sill plate bridges the open gap between the landing edge at x = 73 and cage gate at x = 75 when lowered.</p>                        |
| <p><b>Stair chamber opening</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> y = 20, x = 0-10</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Each western chamber</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> One 5-foot lane ascends; the other descends. No door.</p>              | <p><b>Hoist landing walkways</b></p> <p><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> All U3/M3/L3 floor outside shaft rectangle</p> <p><b>ELEVATION:</b> Respective floor</p> <p><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> West strip is 3 feet wide; north, south, and east strips are 5 feet wide. Medium creatures squeeze only along the west strip. The U3 winch obstructs the north route.</p> |
| <p><b>Stair flights</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p><b>Fixed service ladder</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Vertical line at (87.5,30)<br><br><b>ELEVATION:</b> 0 to -40<br><br><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> East wall; unobstructed access around the south at every level. North access also works at M3/L3; U3 requires climbing over the winch. |
| <b>Winch</b><br><br><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Rectangle (80,20)-(85,25), U3<br><br><b>ELEVATION:</b> 0<br><br><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> One 5-foot square; operator immediately west.                                                                          |
| <b>Safety eyes</b><br><br><b>COORDINATES OR ENDPOINTS:</b> Points (72.5,22.5), (72.5,37.5)<br><br><b>ELEVATION:</b> Each hoist landing<br><br><b>GEOMETRY AND ACCESS:</b> Flush fixtures; no obstruction.                                                               |

The stair is a continuous stacked switchback; up and down lanes exchange direction at successive landings. Use its **60-foot movement route**, not the shorter projected footprint.

Characters can walk around the shaft to its east ladder. The 10 × 10-foot cage leaves the two-foot strip west of its gate open. The sill plate starts raised; lower it as part of the secured crossing procedure. The cage and its four Medium occupant spaces do not extend into that gap.

#### Authoritative Obstacle and Anchor Table

An anchor marks the center of a 5-foot square unless a larger footprint is listed.

| KEY | FEATURE         | POSITION OR FOOTPRINT     | EFFECT                                               |
|-----|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| U1  | Fallen beam     | Rectangle (10,25)-(15,35) | Blocks two squares; half cover.                      |
| U1  | Jori            | Anchor (17.5,32.5)        | Adjacent to beam's east side, outside its footprint. |
| U1  | Southern bypass | y = 35-40, x = 10-20      | Clear 5-foot lane.                                   |
| U2  | Supply bench    | Rectangle (40,20)-(50,25) | Solid furniture; half cover.                         |
| U2  | Tovin           | Anchor (32.5,22.5)        | Clear square northwest of bench.                     |
| U2  | Tool rack       | Rectangle (55,35)-(60,40) | One furniture square.                                |
| M2  | Fallen cabinet  | Rectangle (40,20)-(45,30) | Blocks two squares; half cover.                      |

| KEY | FEATURE              | POSITION OR FOOTPRINT     | EFFECT                                                              |
|-----|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| M2  | Iven                 | Anchor (47.5,22.5)        | Clear space east of cabinet.                                        |
| M2  | Diagram tube         | Point (50,20), north wall | Reachable from Iven's square or its eastern neighbor.               |
| M2  | Calibration trays    | Rectangle (50,35)-(60,40) | Furniture; half cover.                                              |
| M2  | Skitter A            | Anchor (47.5,32.5)        | Small creature in clear square.                                     |
| M2  | Skitter B            | Anchor (57.5,32.5)        | Small creature in clear square.                                     |
| M3  | Pell                 | Anchor (77.5,27.5), cage  | Inside cage.                                                        |
| L1  | Ena                  | Anchor (12.5,32.5)        | Coat occupies her square only.                                      |
| L1  | Sera                 | Anchor (12.5,27.5)        | Beside Ena; clear path east.                                        |
| L2  | Lens housing         | Rectangle (40,25)-(50,35) | Solid 10 × 10-foot obstacle; blocks movement and sight; full cover. |
| L2  | Shutter control, S   | Anchor (32.5,17.5)        | Operator square; west-wall fixture.                                 |
| L2  | Cradle control, C    | Anchor (32.5,42.5)        | Operator square; west-wall fixture.                                 |
| L2  | Bleed control, B     | Anchor (57.5,42.5)        | Operator square; east-wall fixture.                                 |
| L2  | Recorder, R          | Rectangle (45,10)-(50,15) | Cabinet; operator at (47.5,17.5); half cover.                       |
| L2  | West warden          | Anchor (37.5,22.5)        | Medium creature in clear square.                                    |
| L2  | East warden          | Anchor (52.5,37.5)        | Medium creature in clear square.                                    |
| L2  | Observation operator | Anchor (47.5,17.5)        | Recorder operator square.                                           |
| L2  | West exit approach   | x = 30-40, y = 25-35      | Clear 10-foot band west of lens.                                    |

| KEY | FEATURE            | POSITION OR FOOTPRINT | EFFECT                           |
|-----|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| L2  | East exit approach | x = 50-60, y = 25-35  | Clear 10-foot band east of lens. |

Starting creatures fit without overlapping obstacles. Large creatures using 5-foot operator squares must squeeze into adjacent available space under normal SRD rules.

Clear lanes run around all four sides of the lens housing. The north route connects shutter and recorder. The south route measures **25 feet** between cradle and bleed operator centers; the western lane measures **25 feet** between shutter and cradle.

The recorder operator can reach either exit corridor entrance in **no more than 30 feet** around the housing. A speed-30 character can leave from there with ordinary movement on their next turn.

There are no hidden pits, invisible walls, or secret passages.

Map 2: Vertical Route Diagram

The diagram shows relationships, elevations, and evacuation routes; Map 1 remains the tactical reference.

Each horizontal connection is a 10-foot corridor. Each stair connection costs 60 feet of movement. Each hoist or ladder connection changes elevation by 20 feet.

**Collapse boundary:** Rupture affects L2 and blocks its doorways at x = 30 and x = 60. L1, L3, the western stair, and the hoist shaft remain intact. Each side retains an independent route to the surface.

DM and Player Views

**DM floor plan:** Room keys, obstacle footprints, starting anchors, control letters, shaft boundaries, collapse boundary, and threshold notes.

**Player floor plan:** Visible room outlines, corridors, stairs, shaft, guardrails, furniture, and lens housing. Show controls only as unlabeled fixtures. Omit people, constructs, threshold effects, collapse markings, solution letters, and rescue annotations. Reveal panels as explored.

**DM vertical diagram:** Elevations, route times, segment-4 debris, segment-6 cage drop, and L2 collapse boundary.

**Player vertical diagram:** Levels, stairs, hoist, and elevations. Omit thresholds, occupants, and collapse predictions. Share when Jori, Pell, or the survey sketch reveals the route network.

Map Asset Briefs

Map assets are 300 ppi PNG sheets with SVG masters.

| ASSET                      | STABLE PATH                                   | AUDIENCE AND PLACEMENT       | PRINT SPECIFICATION                        |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Three-level floor plan, DM | assets/maps/l<br>ast-light-observatory-dm.png | Private; beside this section | Portrait US Letter, 300 ppi, three aligned |

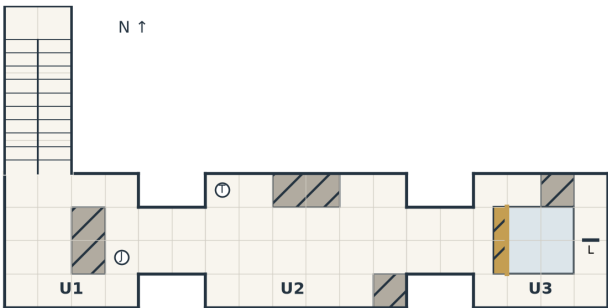
| ASSET                          | STABLE PATH                                       | AUDIENCE AND PLACEMENT             | PRINT SPECIFICATION                                            |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | g                                                 |                                    | panels; readable 5-foot grid and keyed legend.                 |
| Three-level floor plan, player | assets/maps/l<br>ast-light-observatory-player.png | Player-safe; detachable sheet      | Same geometry and dimensions; player-view omissions above.     |
| Vertical route diagram, DM     | assets/maps/l<br>ast-light-section-dm.png         | Private; facing clock reference    | Portrait, 7 × 9-inch live area, high-contrast route lines.     |
| Vertical route diagram, player | assets/maps/l<br>ast-light-section-player.png     | Player-safe; after route discovery | Same topology; no occupants, thresholds, or collapse boundary. |

Use pale stone, charcoal boundaries, muted brass controls, and restrained blue light. Essential information, labels, and scale must remain readable in grayscale. Decorative rubble must not obstruct an unlisted square or open route.

DM Map Sheets

THE LAST LIGHT BELOW

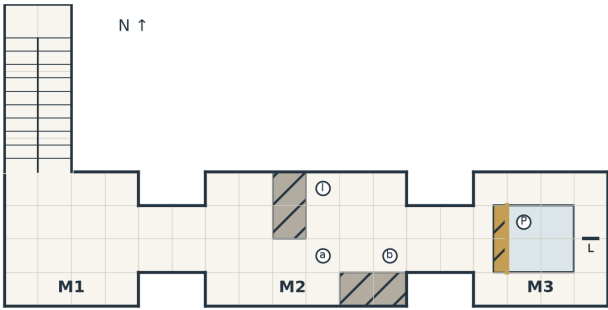
Observatory floor plans | DM ONLY - starting state



UPPER  
0 ft

U1 Entry hall  
U2 Workshop  
U3 Hoist landing

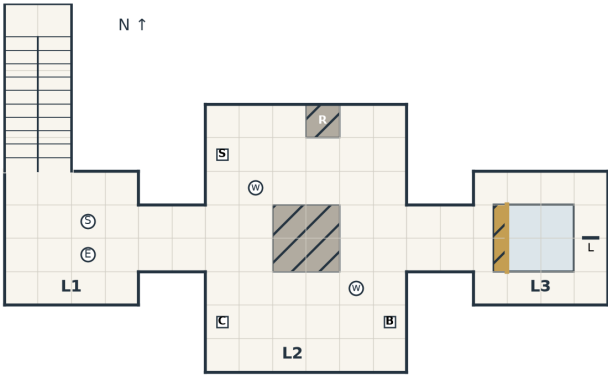
J Jori  
T Tovin



MIDDLE  
-20 ft

M1 Stair landing  
M2 Archive  
M3 Hoist landing

I Iven / P Pell  
a, b Skitters



LOWER  
-40 ft

L1 Vestibule  
L2 Lens chamber  
L3 Hoist landing

E Ena / S Sera  
w Wardens  
S Shutter  
C Cradle  
B Bleed / R Recorder

GRID: 5 FEET | NORTH UP | L = SERVICE LADDER | GOLD STRIP: 2 FT SILL GAP

Stairs: 60 ft movement per level. Hoist/ladder: 20 ft vertical per level. Surface is 20 ft above U1.

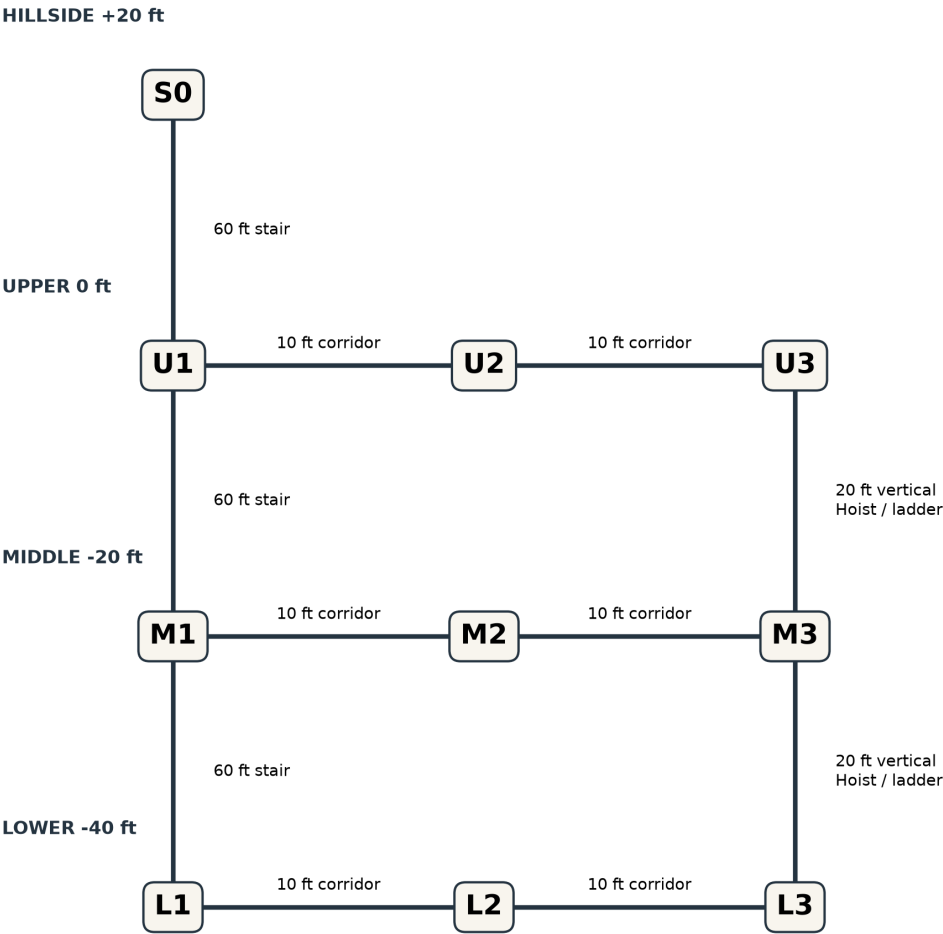
DM: rupture affects L2 only; both doorway openings close. Clock 4: middle stair debris. Clock 6: unsecured cage drops.

Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.

# The Last Light Below

## THE LAST LIGHT BELOW

Routes and elevations | DM ONLY



SCHEMATIC - not to tactical scale. Horizontal labels measure the connecting corridors only.  
Complete route allowances: 1 minute between adjacent rooms; 2 minutes between levels.  
Stair flights and turning landings cost 60 feet of movement per level change.  
Clock 4: the middle stair route costs double until cleared.  
Clock 6: an unsecured cage drops from M3 to L3.  
Rupture: L2 and its two doorways collapse; L1 and L3 retain separate routes to the surface.

Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.

# Encounter Matrix

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. The Beam and the Voice</p> <p>LOCATION: U1</p> <p>MAIN CHALLENGE: Release Jori without further injury</p> <p>EXACT OPPOSITION: None</p> <p>ESSENTIAL GAIN: Survivor; route information</p> <p>ALTERNATE APPROACH: Brace, lift, magic, or bypass</p>                   |
| <p>2. Tools for People</p> <p>LOCATION: U2</p> <p>MAIN CHALLENGE: Prepare and escort Tovin</p> <p>EXACT OPPOSITION: None</p> <p>ESSENTIAL GAIN: Tokens, reel, equipment choices</p> <p>ALTERNATE APPROACH: Take obvious supplies; leave salvage</p>                         |
| <p>3. The Archive That Objects</p> <p>LOCATION: M2</p> <p>MAIN CHALLENGE: Free Iven and obtain diagram</p> <p>EXACT OPPOSITION: Skitters A and B</p> <p>ESSENTIAL GAIN: Shutdown instructions</p> <p>ALTERNATE APPROACH: Token, restore instruments, distract, or fight</p> |
| <p>4. A Cage on One Cable</p> <p>LOCATION: U3/M3/L3</p> <p>MAIN CHALLENGE: Secure cage and recover Pell</p> <p>EXACT OPPOSITION: None</p> <p>ESSENTIAL GAIN: Second evacuation route</p> <p>ALTERNATE APPROACH: Rope, ladder transfer, flight, or rescue at L3</p>          |
| <p>5. One More Reading</p> <p>LOCATION: L1</p> <p>MAIN CHALLENGE: Answer Sera and move Ena</p> <p>EXACT OPPOSITION: None</p> <p>ESSENTIAL GAIN: Cause, settings, informed choice</p> <p>ALTERNATE APPROACH: Refuse, bargain, delegate, or bypass</p>                        |
| <p>6. The Last Light</p> <p>LOCATION: L2</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

|                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MAIN CHALLENGE: Stop lens; optionally save record                           |
| EXACT OPPOSITION: West and east wardens                                     |
| ESSENTIAL GAIN: Final site state; possible record                           |
| ALTERNATE APPROACH: Shutdown, standby, observation, destruction, or retreat |

## Scenes

### Scene 1: Beneath the Split Hill

**Runtime:** 15-20 minutes.

**Objective:** Free Jori and establish the entrance route.

**Stakes:** An unsupported beam movement can injure him.

**Arrival condition:** Use this narration while Jori remains pinned. On return, retain injuries, failed support attempts, and the beam's recorded position.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| READ-ALoud                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| A timber lies across the tiled floor, one end wedged beneath a broken bracket. A man's boot protrudes from behind it. He grips a survey pole across his chest. Along the southern wall, fresh scrapes cross a clear strip of floor toward an open doorway. |

DM Prompt: Jori points to the bracket and explains which end moved during the last tremor.

**Encounter 1: The Beam and the Voice**

**Location:** U1.

**Trigger:** Entering U1 or approaching Jori.

**Opposition:** None.

**Pressure:** The clock begins on first entry. The beam remains stable until shifted without support.

**Examining the Beam**

The beam's eastern edge pins Jori's boot and trouser leg. His leg is compressed, not crushed. The bracket bears most of the weight; pulling him sideways before lifting the edge would worsen his injury.

The southern bypass admits Small and Medium creatures without squeezing. The workshop and northern stair remain accessible if the party leaves him.

One minute of examination identifies sound support points at the bracket and a low stone curb, without a check. A **DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation)** check identifies a faster lever position, reducing **Brace and Lever** from five minutes to one. Failure consumes one minute and reveals an unsafe angle without moving the beam.

Jori knows Tovin reached U2 and the northern stair continues down. He has not seen the other four since the tremor.

### Releasing Jori

1. **Brace and lever:** With a crowbar or strong pole and solid wedge, two characters work for **five minutes**, or **one minute** after the successful Investigation check. Once support points are identified, no further check is needed.

2. **Coordinated lift:** Two characters use actions together. One makes a **DC 13 Strength (Athletics)** check with advantage from assistance. Success frees Jori in one round; failure leaves the beam in place. Repeating without adding a brace causes a slip, deals **1d4 bludgeoning damage** to Jori, and still fails.

3. **Secure rope lift:** A rope around the beam and intact bracket allows two workers to free him in **five minutes**, without a check. The rope stays under load until the beam is lowered or propped.

4. **Magic:** Lifting the edge requires support equivalent to approximately **200 pounds**, though the whole beam weighs much more. Apply the effect's limits. Teleportation works if it can target Jori.

5. **Break the pinning edge:** The damaged wood has **AC 12**, **10 hit points**, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. When it breaks, an unbraced beam slips once for **1d4 bludgeoning damage** to Jori. Bracing prevents the slip.

A character can brace the beam with the crowbar as an action and hold it continuously. Failed lifts then cause no slip, but the holder cannot also assist the lift.

Intermediate clock thresholds do not damage Jori automatically; the bracket remains sound. At 0 hit points, use **Surveyor - NPC Rescue Convention**.

### After Release

Jori walks at **speed 20 feet**, subject to the healing rule in **People to Bring Home**. He can follow an escort or a clearly explained, cleared route. Sent alone from U1, he reaches Mara in **four minutes**, or **two minutes** after healing removes his movement penalty.

He lends his **10-foot survey pole** as a probe and asks for its return. It has no special mechanical benefit.

Record his hit points, beam position, and load-bearing equipment if the rescue remains unfinished. The scrapes lead east to U2; Jori and the plaque identify the northern stair to M1. Neither route clue requires a check.

## Scene 2: The Workshop's Choices

**Runtime:** 15-20 minutes.

**Objective:** Recover Tovin and choose equipment.

**Stakes:** Salvage takes time that could be spent on rescue.

**Arrival condition:** If Tovin has left, show his chalk arrow toward U1. Mention only equipment still present.

### READ-ALoud

Brass frames crowd a bench beneath blue glass lamps. A man with one arm bound against his chest sits beside an open cupboard. Three palm-sized disks hang above him. Across the room, a rope drum rests beneath a sign showing a person being lowered through a hatch.

**DM Prompt:** Tovin offers to identify the equipment while someone checks his shoulder.

### Encounter 2: Tools for People

**Location:** U2.

**Trigger:** Entering or calling to Tovin.

**Opposition:** None.

**Pressure:** Tovin wants to leave but does not know whether Jori's route is clear.

His supported arm requires no Medicine check before travel. Spending **one minute** adjusting the sling earns trust but gives no combat benefit. Picking up supplies provokes nothing; the bench instructions are readable in Common.

### Workshop Equipment

Collecting the obvious supplies takes **one minute**:

- **Three maintenance tokens**, blue on one face and amber on the other; each weighs less than 1 pound.
- **One rescue reel**, with its own 50-foot line; **8 pounds**.
- **One waxed tool wrap**, containing a screwdriver, small pliers, and grease pencil; **2 pounds**.

The cooperative owns the tool wrap, which has no listed treasure value. Its narrow tools can operate recessed standby switches once safely reached.

Two starspindles remain fitted in the bench frame. Removing both takes **five minutes** with the tool wrap or equivalent proper tools, **ten minutes** with improvised tools. Each weighs **3 pounds** and is authorized salvage worth **20 gp**. Neither is needed for rescue or shutdown.

Searching every drawer takes another **five minutes** and finds old invoices, broken fittings, and personal effects. Describe this as a broad search of uncertain value before the party commits.

### Maintenance Instruction

Give **Handout: Workshop Maintenance Strip** when read or explained by Tovin.

The bench strip reads:

### PLAYER TEXT

Blue presented: maintenance requested. Loose calibration pieces returned: maintenance accepted.  
Amber presented: resume assigned work. Lens wardens answer the chamber's shutter state.

Tovin explains that deliberate display within a machine's sight matters; merely carrying a token does nothing. He expects blue to pause the archive skitters but warns that wardens use a separate test.

### Packing and Evacuation

Use normal carrying capacity alongside the reel and hoist's special load limits. The stretcher folds to a **5-foot bundle** and can be tied to a rope for hauling. Someone holding it in both hands must secure or pass it before climbing the ladder.

Tovin urges the party to take the reel before the valuable spindles. He can carry the tool wrap in his good hand and guide freed people from U1 to S0. If he escorts mobile Jori, they take **four minutes** from U1, or **two minutes** after Jori's movement penalty is healed; mark both rescued on arrival.

Tovin will help farther below but refuses an unsecured hoist or a room with hostile constructs. Without a safe route and evacuation plan, he stays at the bench until the lens stops, then makes his own way to U1.

Skipping U2 or losing the tokens does not block progress: instruments can be restored to pacify skitters, supplied ropes can secure the cage, and lens controls carry instructions.

Tovin identifies both exits: west to the stair, M1, and archive; east to U3 for inspection of the cage from above.

## Scene 3: The Archive Keeps Its Order

**Runtime:** 25-35 minutes.

**Objective:** Free Iven and obtain the shutdown diagram.

**Stakes:** Disturbing calibration equipment activates the skitters.

**Arrival condition:** Use Iven's narration only while he is trapped. Preserve cabinet position and each skitter's state.

#### READ-ALoud

A cabinet lies on its side beneath rows of document tubes. Beyond it, a raised hand taps twice against the wall. Two brass devices stand beside trays of glass rings. Their legs remain still as their blue lenses turn toward the doorway.

DM Prompt: Iven asks the characters to avoid the trays and pass him a lever.

### Encounter 3: The Archive That Objects

**Location:** M2, from M1 or M3.

**Trigger:** Entry reveals the skitters; only the triggers below start hostility.

**Opposition:** Exactly **two archive skitters**, A and B; full statistics in **Rules Reference**.

**Positions:** **Authoritative Obstacle and Anchor Table**.

**Objective:** Recover Iven and the diagram; combat is optional.

### Iven and the Trays

The cabinet blocks Iven's shortest exit. A bent shelf pins his coat to the wall, preventing him from reaching the otherwise open southern aisle. He is not crushed beneath the cabinet.

The blue-lensed skitters watch the trays. A strip on the tray frame reads: "Return rings to nests before maintenance."

### Skitter Activation

Both skitters turn amber and click three times when a creature:

- removes a glass ring;
- overturns a tray;
- attacks a skitter;
- forces the cabinet against the trays.

They allow **one round** to correct the disturbance before initiative. Correction returns them to blue. An attack on either skitter ends the warning immediately for both.

Entry, helping Iven, and retrieving the document tube do not provoke them.

### Freeing Iven

• **Cut the coat:** Reach Iven by the clear south and east route and cut the cloth as **one action**.

• **Careful cabinet move:** Two creatures lever it away over **five minutes**, without a check.

• **Fast lift:** One creature makes a **DC 12 Strength (Athletics)** check with another assisting. Success takes one round. Failure leaves the cabinet; failure by **5 or more** pushes it against a tray and triggers the warning.

• **Pass a cutting tool:** Iven frees himself in **one minute** with a blade or suitable tool. A careless throw requires a **DC 10 Dexterity** check; failure drops it within the cabinet footprint. Recovering it from the southern side takes an action.

His voice and visible hand require no search roll.

### Pacifying the Skitters

Either procedure puts both units into standby.

1. **Token route:** Use an action to display blue within **15 feet of both skitters** and request maintenance. If nobody is currently damaging a tray, both enter standby. Hostile skitters first spend their next turns returning loose rings, then enter standby unless attacked again.

2. **Order route:** Return displaced rings to their fitted nests and close both tray lids: **two actions**, one per tray. No check is needed within reach. Both enter standby at the end of the second action, even if previously damaged.

A skitter adjacent to a creature restoring a ring does not make an opportunity attack against that creature during that movement.

Deliberately displaying amber resumes the archive assignment without hostility unless a disturbance remains. The recessed switches can also deliberately reactivate standby skitters.

### Skitter Combat

Target a ring-carrier first, then someone damaging the skitters, then the nearest creature in the room's southern half. Skitters use clamps rather than grapples or dragging and do not attack fallen targets or climb onto unconscious creatures.

Cabinet and tray footprints obstruct movement and provide half cover across relevant attack lines.

At **5 hit points or fewer**, a skitter retreats to the nearest tray and Dodges while clicking. It never pursues beyond M2. Track A and B separately through withdrawal and reengagement.

**The Shutdown Diagram**

Iven can reach the tube while trapped and pass it out on request. Give **Handout: The Cradle Diagram** immediately upon acquisition; freeing him or defeating skitters is not required.

Its sequence is **close shutter, hold bleed, engage cradle**. A new observation requires an open shutter. Resolve operation under **Safe Shutdown**.

Examining old logs for **five minutes** reveals, without a check, that the original observers secured the cradle before powering the lens. During that examination, a **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)** check identifies the recorder's removable leaf format, allowing immediate recognition of a completed record in Scene 6. Failure finds a damaged example; the live indicator still confirms completion.

The party may retreat through either corridor or take the diagram before finishing Iven's rescue. If it bypasses the archive, Sera and the controls supply the shutdown instructions.

Iven says Pell went toward M3; Pell's calls are audible from the eastern corridor while stranded. The western stair leads toward Ena's cough in L1.

**Scene 4: The Suspended Cage**

**Runtime:** 20-30 minutes.

**Objective:** Recover Pell and decide whether to repair the hoist.

**Stakes:** Segment 6 or careless use drops an unsecured cage.

**Arrival condition:** This opener assumes Pell and the cage remain at M3. After rescue, describe their recorded positions and attached lines.

READ-ALoud

A freight cage hangs level with the landing, its gate shut across a narrow gap. Inside, a man braces both hands against the frame. One cable above him has separated into shining strands. An iron eye is fixed beside the gate.

**After a drop:**

READ-ALoud

The shaft is empty at this landing. A torn cable hangs against the far wall beside a descending ladder. Metal scrapes against stone below. An iron safety eye remains beside the open loading gate.

DM Prompt: If conscious and still in danger, Pell asks for a safety line before anyone touches the winch.

**Encounter 4: A Cage on One Cable**

**Location:** M3; winch at U3; possible rescue at L3.

**Trigger:** Approaching the hoist or reaching segment 6.

**Opposition:** None.

**Starting state:** Cage at M3, Pell inside, no safety line, sill plate folded against landing.

The frayed cable and sound safety eye are plainly visible. The east-wall ladder has an unobstructed route around the south of the shaft at all three levels. The north route also works at M3 and L3; at U3 it crosses the winch, a five-foot obstacle costing ten feet of climbing movement with no check when undisturbed.

**Cage and Line Loads**

The cage holds at most **four Medium creatures** and **800 pounds of occupants and gear**. Its empty weight is **300 pounds**. Independent safety suspension must therefore support up to **1,100 pounds**.

The load plate states the limits; Pell repeats them before an overloaded carry. Give **Handout: Hoist Load Plate** when read or explained.

Under this adventure's homebrew rescue procedure:

| SUPPORT                          | CAPACITY                           | MAXIMUM CAGE PAYLOAD            |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| One loaned rescue rope           | 600 pounds                         | 300 pounds                      |
| Two loaned ropes sharing equally | Up to 1,100 pounds total, 550 each | 800 pounds                      |
| Rescue reel                      | 500 pounds                         | 200 pounds                      |
| Each landing or frame eye        | 1,200 pounds                       | Subject to line and cage limits |

Pell and his worn gear weigh **180 pounds**; his occupied cage totals **480 pounds**. Additional support never raises the cage's own 800-pound payload limit.

**Secure the Cage**

From either corner safety eye at M3, thread a rope through the adjacent cage frame eye and landing eye. The worker occupies (70,20)-(75,25) or (70,35)-(75,40), outside the shaft; the frame eye is within reach across the two-foot gap. These positions also reach the sill and gate handles. Use the same corner squares for U3 rope tenders; the winch operator occupies (75,20)-(80,25).

The west strip between x = 70 and 73 requires a Medium creature to squeeze: movement costs an extra foot per foot, its attacks and Dexterity saves have disadvantage, and attacks against it have advantage. The stated one-round secured crossing already includes Pell's movement through this strip. Operating from the corner squares requires no squeezing.

**Attachment:**

- **Careful:** Two minutes, no check.
- **Fast:** One action, DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand). Failure leaves a visibly unseated knot but does not itself

drop the cage.

• **Rescue reel:** Attach line and engage brake in **one minute**, no check; see **Item: Rescue Reel** for its round-based attachment cost.

An adequately rated secured line prevents the segment-6 drop. Share loads between two correctly attached ropes when one is insufficient.

#### Extract Pell Without Repair

Once secured, lowering the sill plate and opening the gate each take **one action**. Pell crosses in **one round**, without a check.

An unsecured crossing requires Pell to make a **DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check with **+0**. Failure makes him slip against the frame and triggers the drop. A tether already secured to a sound anchor can prevent his personal fall.

Flight, teleportation, or suitable lifting magic can remove him without touching the gate, within the effect's limits. Removing Pell does not secure the cage.

#### Make the Hoist Usable

After Pell reaches a landing, he can direct **two workers** at **U3** through a **five-minute repair** with the tool wrap or equivalent hand tools. They transfer the load to the intact hauling line and lock out the frayed suspension. Improvised tools increase the time to **ten minutes**; no check is required.

A stationary landing tie cannot travel with the cage. During the repair, rig each required **50-foot rescue rope** from a cage eye through a **U3** safety eye and around its smooth snubbing post. The 40-foot vertical travel plus 5 feet for knots and wraps fits each rope. Retain the landing tie until the main line and moving backups are taut, then release it.

Each moving backup rope needs **one U3 tender**, separate from the **winch operator**. The tender keeps at least **three wraps** around the post, pays out on descent, and takes up slack on ascent. This friction belay requires no Strength check and does not use the tender's carrying capacity. Line capacity still includes the cage's 300 pounds:

- One rope permits **300 pounds of payload**.
- Two ropes permit **800 pounds of payload**.
- The rescue reel may replace one belayed line only for a trip with **at most 200 pounds of payload**. Do not combine unequal rope and reel capacities to raise that limit.

Freed surveyors can perform these stationary jobs. Tenders stop and lock lines before boarding or unloading. If one releases a line, the winch operator stops immediately; another worker must lock that line before travel resumes. No new cable parts or repairs beyond the stated tools and ropes are needed.

Winching requires continuous work. Each adjacent-floor trip takes **two minutes**, including loading and unloading. Pell can operate from **U3**. A rider's second control rope signals stop but does not propel the cage.

#### The Ladder Route

The ladder is sound. Use normal climbing movement: each foot costs one extra foot unless a feature says otherwise. With both hands free and no immediate disturbance, no check is required.

Carrying an unsecured person requires a **DC 12 Strength (Athletics)** check per **20-foot level change**. Failure means no progress; failure by **5 or more** causes a slip. A secured safety rope catches the climber after **5 feet**, without damage. Otherwise resolve the remaining fall normally.

Two helpers can haul a secured person **one level in two minutes**, without a check, if line and anchors support the load.

#### Cage-Drop Procedure

The cage drops when:

- segment 6 arrives while it is unsecured;
- someone operates the **U3** winch before securing or repairing it;
- an unsecured crossing fails.

It falls **20 feet from M3 to L3** onto the buffers. Each occupant makes a **DC 12 Dexterity saving throw**, taking **2d6 bludgeoning damage** on failure or half on success. A creature tethered to a fixed landing remains at the catch point and takes no cage-drop damage.

The cage rests at **L3** and cannot drop again. Its gate jams. Open it with a crowbar over **five minutes**, or as **one action** with **DC 13 Strength (Athletics)**. Failed checks cost actions; even after three failures, the five-minute method remains available.

Use **Surveyor - NPC Rescue Convention** for Pell at 0 hit points. He remains rescuable; later damage has its normal consequences.

#### Other Supports and Outcomes

Cutting the frayed cable after securing the cage removes the accidental-winch drop trigger but does not make the cage mobile; the repair is still required.

A piton jammed into the sill cannot secure the loaded cage. Pell explains this before an attempt. A rigid beam visibly spanning the loading structure can; fitting workshop timber takes **five minutes**.

Record the cage's elevation, supports, repair, and Pell's location. A drop moves the rescue to **L3** without closing the ladder or western stair. Pell reports that Sera and Ena went to **L1**. A repaired and adequately secured hoist can carry Ena's stretcher.

## Scene 5: The Astronomer's Request

**Runtime:** 20-25 minutes.

**Objective:** Learn the cause, arrange Ena's evacuation, and choose a lens plan.

**Stakes:** A further observation risks people still below.

**Arrival condition:** The opener assumes both women remain in **L1** and the energized lens has an open shutter. Substitute its final two sentences according to lens state:

- **Shutter closed or safe shutdown:** "Steady lamplight falls through the eastern doorway. The coat lies still."
- **Deliberate destruction:** "The coat lies still. Beyond the eastern doorway, broken glass glints around a dark frame."
- **Rupture:** "The coat lies still. Rubble seals the eastern doorway."

If Ena has left, omit her coat and retain any chalk notes. Do not return an absent Sera to L1.

#### READ-ALoud

A woman sits against the wall with one boot unlaced and her ankle on a folded coat. Beside her, another woman writes three chalk symbols: a closed fan, an open valve, and a locked ring. White light spills through the eastern doorway. With each pulse, the coat's loose end lifts from the floor.

DM Prompt: Ena asks for help standing. Sera puts down the chalk.

#### Encounter 5: One More Reading

**Location:** L1.

**Trigger:** Meeting Sera and Ena or reading the doorway strip.

**Opposition:** None.

**Pressure:** Count extended in-character debate; brief procedural clarification is free.

#### The Complete Account

Without a Persuasion check, Sera explains:

- She recognized her brother's beacon among the presets.
- She powered the lens before locking its cradle.
- The cradle alarm sounded before the first large tremor.
- She continued long enough to confirm recent beacon operation.
- She left to help Ena after a loose fitting struck Ena's ankle.
- She can shut down the lens if its controls are reachable.
- A new observation requires three consecutive rounds with the shutter open.
- Starting it pushes the lens closer to failure.

She cannot determine individual life signs or how many expedition members survive. Ena corroborates the events. If accused of deliberate entrapment, Ena says: "She made the wrong choice. She didn't want this."

#### The Independent Control Clue

The L2 doorway strip reads:

#### PLAYER TEXT

For an unsettled lens: close the shutter; maintain the bleed; seat the cradle. Keep the bleed held until the cradle ring shows green. An observation requires an open shutter.

Understanding it takes **one minute**, no check. Use **Safe Shutdown** for operation.

A character proficient with appropriate artisan's tools recognizes, without a roll, that the separated controls prevent one operator from casually energizing and securing everything without assistance.

#### Sera's Proposal

Sera asks to use the recorder after the team's escape is arranged:

1. Remove Ena from the lower level.
2. Station one character near the shutter and another near the cradle.
3. Let Sera operate R for three rounds.
4. Close the shutter when the completion indicator turns white.
5. Hold the bleed and seat the cradle.

She accepts an abort for any reason. If asked for a fixed condition, she agrees: "Abort if the rupture countdown begins, someone falls unconscious, or the shutter operator calls it."

A character may operate the recorder instead. Give **Handout: Sera's Observation Settings** when she supplies the settings.

#### Negotiating with Sera

| PARTY POSITION              | SERA'S RESPONSE                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| People out first            | Agrees and helps carry Ena.                                                                         |
| Immediate shutdown          | Asks once whether they understand the lost lead, then cooperates.                                   |
| Observation if time permits | Accepts a clear abort condition.                                                                    |
| Leave controls to the party | Supplies settings and stays in L1 or evacuates.                                                     |
| More payment                | Has none; offers personal help on a later expedition without obligating the party.                  |
| Destroy the lens            | Argues for shutdown if controls work, then withdraws without interference if destruction is chosen. |

A **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion)** check can change her emotional response by persuading her the decision preserves a future possibility. Failure leaves her upset but cooperative.

Threatening Ena or lying about rescued people damages trust and may cost Sera's optional help. She still explains how to stop the lens.

#### Moving Ena

Ena moves at **speed 10 feet alone, 20 with one helper**, or normal evacuation allowances on the stretcher with **two bearers**. Use **Travel and Evacuation Time** for routes.

Healing that restores at least **1 hit point** removes the penalty. A **DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine)** check over **five**

**minutes** splints the ankle and raises her unaided speed to **20 feet**. Failure uses the time without injury.

Sera can bear the stretcher. Free, present Iven or Tovin can serve as the other bearer; previously evacuated NPCs must actually return before helping.

If the Party Bypasses L1

Characters arriving through L3 can read the L2 control labels and manually operate the recorder.

Sera and Ena remain in L1 until approached, the lens stops, or segment 7 arrives. At segment 7, Sera begins helping Ena up the western stair. Track travel and uncleared debris; they count as rescued only on reaching S0. Their departure leaves chalk marks but no coat.

Refusing Sera does not block the controls. The party can proceed east to L2, evacuate by the western stair or secured working hoist, or retreat.

Scene 6: The Chamber of Borrowed Weight

**Runtime:** 35-45 minutes.

**Objective:** Stop the lens, optionally preserving the final observation.

**Stakes:** The chamber, record, and occupants may be lost.

**Arrival condition:** Use the first opener for an energized lens with open shutter. Mention only surviving wardens and a present recorder. Use the matching replacement after a state change.

READ-ALoud

A glass-ringed machine hangs inside a square brass frame. Dust rises beneath it, settles, then rises again. Three wall controls bear simple symbols. A cabinet against the far wall holds a pale strip behind glass. Two waist-high brass figures turn toward the entrance.

Shutter closed, still energized:

READ-ALoud

A thin seam of white light edges the shutter. The brass frame remains suspended above the floor, surrounded by three wall controls. The recorder stands against the north wall.

DM adjustment: With the shutter closed, dust lies still regardless of the bleed. Mention surviving wardens.

Safe shutdown:

READ-ALoud

The glass rings rest in their brass cradle. A green line shows beneath the western locking bar. Dust lies still around the frame, and the recorder stands under steady lamplight.

Deliberate destruction:

READ-ALoud

Broken glass surrounds the dark brass frame. The wall controls remain intact beside the wreckage. Dust rests motionless on the floor.

Rupture, viewed from L1 or L3:

READ-ALoud

Rubble fills the doorway from floor to lintel. Dust coats the nearest stones. The passage behind you remains open.

DM adjustment: After rupture, L2 is inaccessible until the rescue procedures under **Rupture Countdown** open a way. Do not place characters inside for narration. If controls or recorder were separately damaged or removed, adjust their descriptions accordingly.

DM Prompt: While L2 is accessible, the nearest control label is readable from the doorway. Let the party choose positions before operating anything.

**Encounter 6: The Last Light**

**Location:** L2.

**Trigger:** Entry while the lens is energized.

**Opposition:** West and east lens wardens, except units already disabled or destroyed.

**Positions:** Authoritative Obstacle and Anchor Table.

**Pressure:** Gravity surges and rescue clock.

**Options:** Shutdown, observation, destruction, record retrieval, or escape.

The Initial State

| COMPONENT             | STARTING STATE      |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Shutter               | Open                |
| Bleed                 | Closed              |
| Cradle                | Unseated            |
| Observation           | Not started         |
| Recorder leaf         | Blank               |
| West and east wardens | Active, not hostile |
| Lens                  | Energized           |

Track changes without resetting them on retreat. Operators use the marked stations; climbing the solid central housing is unnecessary.

The Wardens' Warning

On first entry, the wardens say:

"Lens unsettled. Authorized maintenance only."

They become hostile when a creature:

- touches the recorder with the shutter open;
- attacks the lens housing or a warden;

- opens the bleed with the shutter open;
- passes a warden visibly carrying a removed lens component.

Closing the shutter, reading labels, moving through the room, and touching the cradle do not provoke them.

When hostility begins, roll initiative for both wardens and all involved characters and NPCs. Someone waiting in L1 need not join until entering or taking a timed action.

## Gravity Surge

**Homebrew hazard:** While the lens is energized and the shutter open, a surge occurs at **initiative count 20, losing ties**:

- Every second round, beginning with **round 2**.
- Every round at **segment 7 or later**.

If initiative is not already running, begin it when someone starts an observation, tampers with an unsafe control, or undertakes a timed dangerous task in L2. Ordinary descriptive inspection does not incur repeated surge damage.

Immediately before a surge, dust lifts and the lens emits a rising note.

Creatures standing on L2's floor make a **DC 12 Dexterity saving throw**. Failure deals **1d4 bludgeoning damage** and knocks the creature **prone**; success prevents both. Flying and levitating creatures are unaffected by the floor movement but remain vulnerable to attacks.

Holding a fixed rail or wall control with one hand grants advantage, occupies that hand, and costs no action.

Surges never move creatures into the lens, walls, or shaft. Closing the shutter suppresses them immediately. Reopening resumes the existing schedule without granting two new safe rounds. Shutdown or destruction ends them.

## Safe Shutdown

The diagram, L1 strip, labels, and Sera communicate this sequence.

### 1. Close the Shutter

At S, spend **one action**, no check.

The shutter stays closed until reopened with another action at S. Its indicator turns blue; light narrows to a seam and lifting dust falls.

**Effect:** Surges stop and observation cannot proceed. The clock continues.

### 2. Hold the Bleed

At B, with the shutter closed, spend **one action** to pull and hold the lever. No check is required.

The operator stays at B, uses **both hands**, and spends **an action each turn**. Outside initiative, holding is continuous and prevents other tasks; there is no arbitrary endurance limit during this adventure.

A steady hiss replaces the uneven hum and the gauge enters its blue band.

**Effect:** The clock and rupture countdown pause at their current values. Release closes the valve immediately and resumes them.

**Rigging:** A rope or object can supply the controlled pull without bending the lever. Rigging rope to the fixed wall eye at B takes **two actions**, no check. It holds until cut, released, or removed. The fixture occupies no extra square and the restraint crosses no walking lane.

### 3. Engage the Cradle

At C, with shutter closed and bleed held, spend **one action** to depress the pedal and pull the locking bar. No check is required.

The frame settles with a heavy click and the indicator turns green.

**Effect:** The lens stops permanently; the clock and rupture countdown end. Release the bleed. Wardens enter standby at the end of the current turn unless someone is actively damaging them.

A lone operator can close S, rig B with two actions, then reach C. Multiple operators can work faster; the clear routes in **Map Specifications** connect every station.

## Incorrect or Partial Operations

**Bleed opened against open shutter:** The gauge jumps red; the operator takes **1d6 force damage**, no save, and the lever springs closed. This provokes wardens. It adds only actual time spent to the clock.

**Cradle attempted too early:** The bar refuses to seat and flashes the missing shutter or bleed symbol. The action is spent without damage.

**Shutter reopened while bleed held:** The bleed closes and any restraint goes slack. No damage occurs. Clock and surges resume. Reestablishing a rigged hold requires **one action at B**.

**Operator knocked away:** An unrigged bleed closes; resume the clock at its recorded value.

**Damaged control:** Each has AC 15, **12 hit points**, immunity to poison and psychic damage. At 0 hit points it becomes inoperable in its current state. Repair requires **ten minutes**, workshop tools, and a **DC 12 Intelligence check**. Failure consumes the time; replacement parts from U2 permit a further automatic **ten-minute repair**. Destruction remains an alternative.

These rules govern deliberate and accidental damage. Wardens do not attack controls.

## Maintenance Standby for the Wardens

The shutter must be closed.

• **Token:** Spend **one action within 15 feet of a warden**, show blue, and say "maintenance." Both wardens that see it enter standby immediately.

• **Narrow tool:** Spend **one action adjacent to a warden** pressing its recessed blue switch. With the shutter closed, it permits the approach. Each warden needs a separate action.

If the shutter reopens before shutdown, standby wardens reactivate at the beginning of the following round. They retain hit points and resume their warning unless an observation or other hostility trigger is already occurring.

After shutdown they remain in standby. Amber can later restore ordinary guarding but cannot restart the lens.

## Conducting the Final Observation

Explain the one-time clock cost before commitment.

**Requirements:** Energized lens, open shutter, accessible recorder, known beacon settings, and **three consecutive rounds** of operation.

Settings come from Sera or the recorder preset labeled "**Venn Expedition / northern beacon.**" Reading the labels takes **one minute**, no check. Give **Handout: Sera's Observation Settings** upon acquisition.

### Start and Maintain

At **R**, spend **one action** selecting the preset and starting the recorder. This counts as **round 1**.

Immediately add **ten minutes** to the rescue clock and announce crossed thresholds. Charge this only once during the adventure; it represents added instability, not ten minutes of waiting.

An operator at **R** must spend **one action in each of the next two consecutive rounds**. Operators may change without penalty. At the end of the third action, the indicator turns white and the leaf becomes a completed beacon record. No check is required.

### Interruption

Missing a required action or closing the shutter resets progress to zero. Another attempt needs three consecutive actions but incurs **no second surcharge**.

A partial leaf provides no usable location. It can be reused until the lens stops or is destroyed.

### Result

The completed leaf contains the information in **Handout: The Beacon Record**: the shelf below the Grey Teeth's split summit, **eight miles north by northeast**, marked by a pale stone arch on its southern approach, with **three manually repeated distress groups within the last hour**.

It gives neither route hazards nor assurance of survivors. Share the handout only after the leaf is retrieved or copied.

## Recovering the Record

At **R**, opening the drawer takes **one action**; releasing and removing the leaf takes **one further action**. Different creatures may perform them. The drawer stays open.

Safe shutdown preserves a completed leaf. Deliberate destruction also leaves it intact inside the recorder unless a separate attack damages that cabinet; the break pulse does not damage objects. Rupture destroys any leaf left in **L2**. A removed leaf survives if its carrier and possessions are recovered normally.

The recorder has **AC 13, 10 hit points**. Breaking it allows removal as an action, but the retriever must make a **DC 10 Dexterity saving throw** when pulling the leaf from a cabinet reduced to 0 hit points. Failure tears it on the fractured cover, making it unreadable. Normal drawer operation carries no such risk.

## Deliberate Destruction

The lens housing has **AC 13, 24 hit points**, immunity to poison and psychic damage, and no other resistance. Attacks strike exposed supports and glass rings.

One minute of inspection reveals marked sacrificial supports and warns of a room-wide pulse, without a check. Sera can give the same warning.

At 0 hit points, the lens breaks and discharges once:

**Break pulse:** Every creature in **L2** makes a **DC 12 Dexterity saving throw**, taking **2d6 force damage** on failure or half on success. Full cover behind the housing does not protect against this chamber-filling pulse. Creatures entirely outside **L2** are unaffected.

The clock ends, surges cease, and wardens enter standby at the end of the current turn. The chamber remains traversable because breakage releases strain before rupture. Further attacks on wreckage cause no discharge.

## Warden Combat

Use the complete **Lens Warden** statistics in **Rules Reference**.

**Targets:** First a creature damaging the lens, then the recorder operator, then a creature attacking a warden. They do not attack merely to punish flight.

**Tactics:** One approaches **R** through the north lane; the other blocks the nearest clear approach. They use normal spaces and reach, cannot cross the housing, and never pursue outside **L2**.

**Morale:** At **8 hit points or fewer**, retreat toward the starting recess and Dodge unless someone is actively damaging the lens. Maintenance remains available.

Track west and east separately, retaining their hit points, positions, and states on return.

## Rupture Countdown

At segment 8, announce:

"The white seam widens. Three deep knocks sound inside the frame, evenly spaced. The floor is beginning to separate around it."

Begin a **three-round countdown**.

| ROUND    | CONDITION                                                                   |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | Cracks spread; all routes remain open.                                      |
| 2        | Fragments fall; all routes remain open and the record can still be removed. |
| End of 3 | <b>L2</b> ruptures unless paused or stopped.                                |

**Immediate countermeasures:** Closed shutter plus held bleed pauses the countdown. Seating the cradle ends it. Destroying the lens substitutes the break pulse for collapse. See **Safe Shutdown** and **Deliberate Destruction**.

#### At Rupture

Each creature remaining in L2 makes a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw**, taking **4d6 bludgeoning damage** on failure or half on success. All surviving occupants become **prone and restrained beneath rubble**.

Both doorways block. The lens, controls, recorder, any record still inside, and both wardens are destroyed. L1, L3, the western stair, and the shaft remain intact.

#### Rubble Rescue

A restrained survivor can attempt **DC 12 Strength (Athletics)** as an action to free themselves. Failure causes no further damage.

Two outside workers can open a rescue pocket in **twenty minutes**, freeing one accessible survivor. Each additional survivor in that pocket takes **five minutes**.

Air spaces last **eight hours**. Time alone causes no repeated collapse damage. Use the NPC rescue convention or normal player-character rules for unconscious survivors.

A freed character can crawl to the nearer former doorway in **five minutes**. Full excavation takes days; until then L2 cannot serve as a through route.

After any lens outcome, evacuate using the recorded stair and shaft states, then return to S0 for accounting. Retreat before resolution leaves the clock running.

## Rules Reference

These homebrew creatures and procedures are intended for four 3rd-level characters using SRD 5.1.

### Archive Skitter

*Small construct, unaligned*

**Armor Class:** 13, brass shell

**Hit Points:** 11

**Speed:** 30 feet, climb 20 feet

8 (−1)

DEX: 14 (+2)

CON: 12 (+1)

INT: 3 (−4)

WIS: 10 (+0)

CHA: 3 (−4)

**Saving Throws:** Dexterity +4

**Damage Immunities:** Poison

**Condition Immunities:** Charmed, frightened, poisoned

**Senses:** Darkvision 60 feet, passive Perception 10

**Languages:** Understands Common maintenance commands; cannot speak

**Proficiency Bonus:** +2

**Construct Nature.** The skitter does not require air, food, drink, or sleep.

**Archive Assignment.** It does not voluntarily leave M2. It prioritizes displaced calibration rings and accepts **Pacifying the Skitters** in Encounter 3.

**Clamp. Melee Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. **Hit:** 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Skittering Withdrawal.** As a bonus action, the skitter moves up to 10 feet without provoking opportunity attacks, only toward a calibration tray or its original position.

**Reactions:** Normal opportunity attacks, except against the movement of an adjacent creature restoring a ring under its maintenance procedure.

**Morale:** At 5 hit points or fewer, retreats to a tray and Dodges as described in **Skitter Combat**.

A destroyed skitter provides no autonomous companion, valuable gems, or assigned salvage value.

### Lens Warden

*Medium construct, unaligned*

**Armor Class:** 14, plated frame

**Hit Points:** 27

**Speed:** 25 feet

14 (+2)

DEX: 10 (+0)

CON: 14 (+2)

INT: 4 (−3)

WIS: 12 (+1)

CHA: 4 (−3)

**Saving Throws:** Strength +4, Constitution +4

**Damage Immunities:** Poison

**Condition Immunities:** Charmed, frightened, poisoned

**Senses:** Darkvision 60 feet, passive Perception 11

**Languages:** Understands Common; speaks fixed Common warnings

**Proficiency Bonus:** +2

**Construct Nature.** The warden does not require air, food, drink, or sleep.

**Grounded Frame.** The warden automatically succeeds on saving throws against L2's gravity surge. This protection does not apply to other effects.

**Custodial Limit.** It does not voluntarily leave L2. It accepts **Maintenance Standby for the Wardens** and **Safe Shutdown** exactly as described.

**Baton.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Repulsion Tap, Recharge 5-6.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) force damage. The target must succeed on a **DC 12 Strength saving throw** or be pushed 5 feet directly away. The push stops before solid obstacles or other creatures. The warden will not use this action if the only resulting destination is outside L2.

**Reactions:** Normal opportunity attacks only.

**Morale:** At 8 hit points or fewer, retreats to its starting recess and Dodges unless the lens is being damaged.

The integrated forearm baton becomes an ordinary metal club if removed. It has no force effect, magic-item use, or value beyond incidental scrap.

## Surveyor

*Medium humanoid, any nonhostile alignment*

**Armor Class:** 10

**Hit Points:** 7 maximum; Jori starts at 5, Ena at 4, others at 7

**Speed:** 30 feet, modified by listed injuries

10 (+0)  
DEX: 10 (+0)  
CON: 10 (+0)  
INT: 12 (+1)  
WIS: 11 (+0)  
CHA: 10 (+0)

**Skills:** One appropriate professional skill +3; no unlisted rescue success.

**Senses:** Passive Perception 10

**Languages:** Common

**Improvised Tool.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

Surveyors Dodge, Disengage, help with clearly safe tasks, or escape. They do not serve as six additional reliable combatants.

**NPC Rescue Convention, homebrew.** Environmental damage that reduces a surveyor to 0 hit points leaves them unconscious and stable. Further damage causes death saving throw failures normally; massive damage can still kill. Constructs do not attack unconscious surveyors.

## Party Fit and Scaling

At normal scaling, skitters have 11 hit points each and wardens 27. Neither pair has Multiattack, paralysis, area attacks, or tactics that target unconscious characters. The shutter suppresses the surge with one action; the largest damage risks are the warned cage fall, break pulse, and rupture.

Fighting both pairs should consume resources without requiring a short rest.

**Three 3rd-level characters:** Both skitters have **8 hit points**. Use only the west warden, with **22 hit points**; an inert frame in the east recess never activates. Observation still requires three rounds. Rescue and control DCs stay unchanged.

**Five 3rd-level characters:** Retain the four identities and positions. Skitters have **14 hit points** each; wardens have **34**. Do not add reinforcements or surge damage.

**Four 2nd-level characters:** Use the three-character adjustment. Surge damage becomes **1**, break pulse **1d6**, and rupture warning **four rounds**. Keep the hazard warnings explicit.

**Four 4th-level characters:** Use the five-character hit points. Stronger abilities work normally; add no anti-flight fields, teleportation restrictions, or hidden wards.

## Resting and Unusual Abilities

A short rest takes **one hour**, advancing an active, unpaused clock **six segments**. Tell the players before they commit. Holding or rigging the bleed can permit a rest; use **Safe Shutdown** for its requirements.

**Flight** bypasses ladder and cage transfers within the effect's carrying limits.

**Teleportation** can extract pinned or stranded people if targeting and destination requirements are met.

**Divination** has no special interference. Revealing shutdown instructions early is a valid result.

**Familiars and small helpers** may carry tokens, deliver light lines, or inspect labels. Operating machinery still requires the physical capacity specified by the effect and control.

**Magelike hand** can carry light equipment and manipulate suitable objects within its limits. It cannot lift the beam's 200-pound edge or supply the bleed's sustained two-handed force. It can deliver a rope end or carry an already released recorder leaf within its weight limit.

## Items and Equipment

### Item: Rescue Reel

**Appearance:** Brass drum, folding handle, black brake lever, red mark on the final five feet of line.

**Quantity:** One.

**Starting owner:** Cairn Survey Cooperative; authorized as salvage after rescue.

**Location:** U2.

**Value:** 20 gp.

**Weight:** 8 pounds.

**Rules:** Homebrew mundane equipment; no attunement or charges.

The **50-foot line** supports **500 pounds** when anchored soundly.

Attaching to an accessible eye or beam and engaging the brake takes **one minute**, or **two actions** in rounds, without a check. The brake holds the current length; releasing or reengaging it takes **one action**.

Turning the handle as an action raises or lowers **up to 250 pounds by 5 feet**. Moving **251-500 pounds by 5 feet** takes two creatures, each spending an action.

The reel cannot raise the loaded freight cage by itself. It can secure Pell's occupied cage while the main hoist carries the weight; moving use follows **Make the Hoist Usable**.

The line has **AC 11, 5 hit points**, immunity to poison and psychic damage. Cutting releases the load. Overload makes the brake slip audibly, lowering the load **5 feet per round** until weight is reduced or support added. If the load reaches the line's end without support and remains excessive, the line breaks.

The reel grants no attack, climbing-speed, or unrelated check bonus. Repacking takes **five minutes**; repeated use needs no magical recovery.

Item: Maintenance Tokens

**Appearance:** Palm-sized brass disks, blue enamel on one face and amber on the other.

**Quantity:** Three.

**Location:** U2.

**Owner:** Cooperative; return after use.

**Value:** No listed reward value.

**Weight:** Less than 1 pound each.

**Rules:** Homebrew mundane authorization devices.

Deliberate display costs **one action** in initiative. Use **Pacifying the Skitters** or **Maintenance Standby for the Wardens** for the machine's conditions and 15-foot range.

Anyone who knows which face to show can use a token. Tokens have no charges, are not consumed, and do not charm creatures, unlock doors, or command unrelated constructs. Losing one has no effect on the others.

Item: Starspindles

**Appearance:** Thumb-length brass axles in clear glass sleeves.

**Quantity:** Two.

**Location:** U2 bench frame.

**Owner:** Cooperative; Mara or Sera grants salvage permission.

**Value:** 20 gp each; 40 gp total.

**Weight:** 3 pounds each.

Use **Workshop Equipment** for removal: **five minutes** with proper tools, **ten** improvised. Broken sleeves destroy sale value without an explosion.

These mundane precision components have no activated effect, attunement, charges, or recovery procedure. They are unrelated to the active cradle; removal neither

advances the clock beyond time spent nor prevents shutdown.

Item: Beacon Record

**Appearance:** Pale flexible leaf with dark intersecting curves and a white completion square.

**Quantity:** One possible completed record.

**Location:** Created at R in L2.

**Owner:** Cooperative survey record; the party may retain a copy after delivery.

**Payment:** 40 gp for a readable completed leaf.

**Other sale value:** None assigned.

The leaf is mundane information, with no activation, charges, attunement, or tracking effect. Its destination appears in **Handout: The Beacon Record**; blank and interrupted leaves contain no usable location.

Copying a readable leaf takes **ten minutes** with paper and ink and preserves all useful information. Copies do not earn additional record fees. See **Recovering the Record** for extraction and damage.

Rewards and Follow-Up

Reward Ledger

All payments and salvage values are **for the party**.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Contract advance</p> <p>SOURCE AND OWNER: Cooperative rescue chest</p> <p>QUANTITY/VALUE: 40 gp</p> <p>ACCESS CONDITION: Accept rescue</p> <p>ACCOUNTING NOTE: Part of 200 gp base contract</p>                              |
| <p>Contract balance</p> <p>SOURCE AND OWNER: Cooperative rescue chest</p> <p>QUANTITY/VALUE: 160 gp</p> <p>ACCESS CONDITION: Honest accounting of all six and lens</p> <p>ACCOUNTING NOTE: Honest partial failure qualifies</p> |
| <p>Survivor bonus</p> <p>SOURCE AND OWNER: Cooperative rescue chest</p> <p>QUANTITY/VALUE: 10 gp each, up to 60 gp</p> <p>ACCESS CONDITION: Surveyor reaches S0 alive</p> <p>ACCOUNTING NOTE: Each person counts once</p>       |
| <p>Record fee</p> <p>SOURCE AND OWNER: Cooperative rescue chest</p> <p>QUANTITY/VALUE: 40 gp</p>                                                                                                                                |

**ACCESS CONDITION:** Readable completed final record delivered

**ACCOUNTING NOTE:** Once, regardless of copies

#### Starspindles

**SOURCE AND OWNER:** U2, authorized cooperative salvage

**QUANTITY/VALUE:** Two at 20 gp; 40 gp total

**ACCESS CONDITION:** Removed intact with permission

**ACCOUNTING NOTE:** Independent of lens outcome

#### Rescue reel

**SOURCE AND OWNER:** U2, authorized cooperative salvage

**QUANTITY/VALUE:** One worth 20 gp

**ACCESS CONDITION:** Recovered and retained after rescue

**ACCOUNTING NOTE:** Equipment or sale value, not both

**Maximum cooperative payment:** 300 gp, including the advance.

**Maximum salvage:** 60 gp.

**Maximum combined value:** 360 gp.

Return ropes, stretcher, lantern, harnesses, pitons, hammer, crowbar, tokens, and tool wrap. Mara does not charge for equipment honestly lost saving someone. Deliberate theft affects the relationship.

Constructs and lens contain no hidden cash. The cooperative may later salvage ordinary debris, but it has no additional adventuring reward value.

## Payment Disputes

Survivor testimony, a personal item, a described inaccessible position, or direct inspection can establish an honest accounting.

If someone remains trapped and reachable after shutdown, Mara asks the party to continue. She does not withhold the balance to force dangerous unpaid labor.

A knowingly false report of death or concealed reachable survivor can cause Mara to delay the disputed balance while investigating. Identify the disputed claim.

Sera cannot cancel payment because observation was refused. Mara cannot cancel the fee for a delivered readable leaf because she disliked the risk.

## Accomplishment Rewards

For milestone play, the adventure can count as one meaningful milestone toward 4th level, without necessarily awarding an entire level in a slower campaign.

Alternatively, award this **homebrew accomplishment XP** instead of creature XP:

- 100 XP per surveyor delivered alive to S0, maximum 600 XP.

- 400 XP for permanently ending the lens danger by shutdown or destruction.

- 200 XP for resolving archive opposition through maintenance, combat, or avoidance that secures the objective.

- 200 XP for resolving wardens through maintenance, shutdown, destroying them, or successful operation while avoiding them.

- 200 XP for recovering the completed beacon record.

**Maximum:** 1,600 XP for the party, or 400 each for four characters.

Each accomplishment is awarded once. Fighting constructs already placed in standby earns no second award.

## Resolution Paths

### Everyone Out, Lens Safely Shut Down

The observatory remains accessible except for recorded damage. The shutter is closed, cradle seated, and lens inert. Wardens are in standby unless destroyed; skitters retain their states.

Rescued surveyors receive care at S0. Without earlier healing, Jori and Ena recover from their scenario injuries over several days.

Mara is satisfied. Sera helps document safe restart requirements even if disappointed by a lost observation; she does not restart the machine after the party leaves.

The cooperative retains ownership of records and machinery, pays the contract and bonuses, and permits the authorized salvage. After structural repairs, it offers supervised research access.

### The Record Saved and the Lens Shut Down

Apply **Everyone Out, Lens Safely Shut Down** where the rescue is complete, with the record and its 40 gp fee.

Sera copies the location and asks whether the party wants to discuss a separate expedition rescue. Mara calls for weather information, climbing equipment, and a second team before departure.

Sera is grateful, particularly if an agreed abort condition was respected. Mara respects an operation that preserved the record without abandoning current casualties. The record's destination is given in **Handout: The Beacon Record**; no new observatory failure follows automatically.

### The Lens Deliberately Destroyed

After **Deliberate Destruction**, L2 remains traversable but local tools cannot repair the instrument. Replacing its unique optical element would be a major undertaking.

The recorder and completed leaf survive unless independently damaged. Sera accepts responsibility for the circumstances and does not blame the party for choosing the warned emergency measure.

Base payment and survivor bonuses remain available; the record fee depends on delivery alone. The cooperative removes loose valuables, documents the wreckage, and closes L2 to casual visitors. The rest of the site remains available for later exploration without surges.

The Party Leaves Before Stopping the Lens

Continue the clock, applying **Cage-Drop Procedure** at segment 6 and **Rupture Countdown** at segment 8.

Resolve actual positions:

- Jori remains pinned unless freed.
- Tovin stays in U2 until the lens stops, then attempts the route to U1.
- Iven remains trapped unless freed.
- Pell faces the drop if still in an unsecured cage.
- At segment 7, Sera begins helping Ena up the western stair if both remain in L1.
- Anyone in L2 at rupture faces its damage and burial.

People outside L2 are not automatically killed. Mara provides surface treatment and asks for last verified locations. Honest accounting can earn base payment; survivor bonuses require arrival at S0, and the record fee requires a readable completed leaf.

A return uses the existing injuries, people, and damage.

Rupture with Survivors Trapped

L2's contents and doorways are destroyed or blocked as specified in **Rupture Countdown**. Both vertical routes outside it retain their previous states.

Use **Rubble Rescue: eight hours of air, twenty minutes for two workers to reach the first accessible survivor**, then **five minutes each** in the same pocket. Mara's attendants can join excavation after the lens danger ends.

The cooperative listens for voices, opens rescue pockets, and accounts for possessions. A previously removed record may be recovered with its carrier.

Partial Rescue with an Intact Site

Stopping the lens removes the clock but does not free anyone still trapped. Preserve beam, cabinet, cage, and injury states.

The party can use careful rescue methods, bring Mara below, recruit more helpers, or rest. No new clock begins.

Return Visits

Consult the **Campaign-State Ledger** and the matching resolution before narration.

- **Safe shutdown:** Steady lamps, still air, visible green cradle indicator.
- **Deliberate destruction:** Inert glass and supports, no residual attack hazard.
- **Rupture:** Blocked L2; western stair and eastern shaft remain separate routes. Use **Rubble Rescue**, not normal

through travel.

- **Hoist:** Repairs persist, cage elevation remains recorded, and lines stay attached unless removed.
- **People:** Evacuees remain outside or in care; use actual locations for anyone still below.
- **Record:** Preserve whether blank, partial, completed inside, removed, copied, or destroyed. A partial observation never becomes a usable clue later.

Campaign-State Ledger

People

|       |
|-------|
| Jori  |
| Tovin |
| Iven  |
| Pell  |
| Sera  |
| Ena   |

Site

| STATE                 | RECORD                                                            |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Clock                 | ___ completed segments + ___ minutes                              |
| Clock paused?         | No / bleed held / bleed rigged                                    |
| Middle stair debris   | Not fallen / present / cleared                                    |
| U1 beam               | Original / held / propped / moved / broken                        |
| M2 cabinet            | Original / moved; Iven's coat cut?                                |
| Cage                  | M3 / U3 / L3 / between levels                                     |
| Cage safety           | Unsecured / one line / two lines / other support                  |
| Hoist repair          | Unrepaired / repaired                                             |
| Shutter               | Open / closed / damaged in stated position                        |
| Bleed                 | Closed / held / rigged / damaged                                  |
| Cradle                | Unseated / seated / damaged                                       |
| Lens                  | Energized / safely stopped / deliberately broken / ruptured       |
| Observation surcharge | Not charged / charged once                                        |
| Observation progress  | 0 / 1 / 2 / complete                                              |
| Recorder drawer       | Closed / open / broken                                            |
| Leaf                  | Blank / partial / completed inside / removed / copied / destroyed |

| STATE       | RECORD                                         |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Skitter A   | Location, hit points, active/standby/destroyed |
| Skitter B   | Location, hit points, active/standby/destroyed |
| West warden | Location, hit points, active/standby/destroyed |
| East warden | Location, hit points, active/standby/destroyed |

## Relationships and Accounting

Record:

- The observation decision and any agreed abort condition.
- What Mara and Sera were told.
- Specific disputed rescue claims.
- Advance paid, survivor bonuses earned, and record fee earned.
- Salvage recovered and loaned equipment returned or lost.
- Whether the party accepted a separate expedition discussion.

## Handouts

### DM Distribution Guide

Share each handout separately at its acquisition point.  
These instructions are private.

| HANDOUT                      | DISTRIBUTION                                                                         |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mara's Rescue Roster         | S0, before entry; only Mara's known facts.                                           |
| Workshop Maintenance Strip   | Reading U2's strip or hearing Tovin's explanation; do not bundle the cradle diagram. |
| The Cradle Diagram           | Iven passes it out or a character retrieves the M2 tube.                             |
| Hoist Load Plate             | Reading the plate at U3, M3, or L3, or hearing Pell's instructions.                  |
| Sera's Observation Settings  | Sera supplies settings or the party reads the L2 preset.                             |
| The Beacon Record            | A completed leaf is retrieved or a readable copy made; never for partial progress.   |
| A Note from the Rescue Wagon | After accounting; fill only established facts.                                       |

## Handout: Mara's Rescue Roster

### Cairn Survey Cooperative - Missing Below

Jori Bell - route surveyor. Carries a long measuring pole.

Tovin Rusk - instrument fitter. Broad leather tool apron.

Iven Darr - archivist. Ink-stained cuffs, green coat.

Pell Fen - hoist operator. Red cord tied around his wrist.

Sera Venn - astronomer. Brass watch, graphite-stained hands.

Ena Sol - observer. Blue scarf, field notebook.

Bring each person to the hillside wagon if possible. If someone cannot be moved, record the exact place and what prevents the rescue.

Payment for the party: 200 gold total, including 40 paid in advance. Ten additional gold for each person brought out alive. Forty additional gold for a readable final beacon record.

- Mara Quill

## **Handout: Workshop Maintenance Strip**

### **MAINTENANCE TOKENS**

Blue presented: maintenance requested.

Loose calibration pieces returned: maintenance accepted.

Amber presented: resume assigned work.

Keep trays closed while moving equipment.

Lens wardens answer the chamber's shutter state.

## Handout: The Cradle Diagram

### FOR AN UNSETTLED LENS

#### 1 - SHUTTER CLOSED

Close the western shutter wheel. Confirm the blue indicator.

#### 2 - BLEED MAINTAINED

Pull and hold the bleed lever. Keep the gauge in its blue band.

#### 3 - CRADLE SEATED

While the bleed remains held, depress the cradle pedal and pull its locking bar. Confirm the green indicator.

Release the bleed only after the cradle shows green.

**Observation note:** A new observation requires an open shutter. Closing the shutter interrupts an unfinished reading.

**Warning:** Opening the bleed against an open shutter causes a local discharge.

## Handout: Hoist Load Plate

### FREIGHT CAGE

Maximum payload: 800 pounds, including equipment. Empty cage: 300 pounds. Safety suspension must support both.

Maximum occupancy: four persons.

Secure an independent safety line before boarding a damaged cage. Each loaned rope supports 600 pounds; use two shared ropes for a full payload. During travel, tend backup ropes from the upper landing snubbing posts; a stationary landing tie cannot move with the cage.

Do not operate the winch against a frayed suspension.

The eastern service ladder remains available when the cage is out of use.

## Handout: Sera's Observation Settings

**Preset: Venn Expedition / Northern Beacon**

Shutter open.

Start the recorder and maintain the reading through three consecutive intervals. A white square confirms completion.

Closing the shutter or leaving an interval unattended breaks the reading. An incomplete leaf can be exposed again.

Once complete, open the drawer and release the leaf before removing it.

Sera's note: "Stop if the chamber begins its final failure. The record is not worth another person."

## Handout: The Beacon Record

### NORTHERN BEACON - POSITION RESOLVED

Bearing from Cairn Hill: north by northeast.

Distance: eight miles.

The signal originates on a shelf below the split summit of the Grey Teeth. A pale stone arch marks the shelf's southern approach.

Three manually repeated distress groups were received within the preceding hour.

The instrument confirms position and recent operation. It does not report the number or condition of people at the beacon.

## Handout: A Note from the Rescue Wagon

### Cairn Hill Rescue

Returned alive: \_\_\_\_\_

Others accounted for: \_\_\_\_\_

The observatory was left: \_\_\_\_\_

Beacon record received: yes / no

Contract balance paid: \_\_\_\_\_

Survivor bonuses paid: \_\_\_\_\_

Record fee paid: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized salvage retained: \_\_\_\_\_

The cooperative thanks those who went below and returned with the truth.

- Mara Quill

# Quick Reference Sheets

## Rescue Methods

Use the named procedure for alternate methods, equipment limits, and interruptions.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Jori's beam</p> <p><b>RELIABLE METHOD:</b> Two workers, five minutes; one after DC 11 Investigation</p> <p><b>FAST OR RISKY METHOD:</b> DC 13 Athletics with help</p> <p><b>FAILURE CONSEQUENCE:</b> No movement; repeat without brace slips for 1d4 damage</p> <p><b>PROCEDURE:</b> Releasing Jori</p> |
| <p>Iven's coat</p> <p><b>RELIABLE METHOD:</b> Reach him, cut cloth: one action</p> <p><b>FAST OR RISKY METHOD:</b> DC 12 Athletics cabinet lift with help</p> <p><b>FAILURE CONSEQUENCE:</b> No movement; failure by 5 triggers warning</p> <p><b>PROCEDURE:</b> Freeing Iven</p>                          |
| <p>Cage safety</p> <p><b>RELIABLE METHOD:</b> Rope: two minutes</p> <p><b>FAST OR RISKY METHOD:</b> DC 12 Sleight of Hand: one action</p> <p><b>FAILURE CONSEQUENCE:</b> Visibly unsecured knot</p> <p><b>PROCEDURE:</b> Secure the Cage</p>                                                               |
| <p>Pell's exit</p> <p><b>RELIABLE METHOD:</b> Secured cage; plate and gate one action each; cross one round</p> <p><b>FAST OR RISKY METHOD:</b> Unsecured DC 12 Acrobatics</p> <p><b>FAILURE CONSEQUENCE:</b> Cage drop</p> <p><b>PROCEDURE:</b> Extract Pell Without Repair</p>                           |
| <p>Hoist repair</p> <p><b>RELIABLE METHOD:</b> Two workers, tools: five minutes</p> <p><b>FAST OR RISKY METHOD:</b> Improvised tools: ten minutes</p> <p><b>FAILURE CONSEQUENCE:</b> Time cost; no roll</p> <p><b>PROCEDURE:</b> Make the Hoist Usable</p>                                                 |
| <p>Ena's ankle</p> <p><b>RELIABLE METHOD:</b> Healing, helper, or stretcher</p> <p><b>FAST OR RISKY METHOD:</b> DC 12 Medicine: five minutes</p> <p><b>FAILURE CONSEQUENCE:</b> No improvement or damage</p>                                                                                               |

|                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>PROCEDURE:</b> Moving Ena                                           |
| <b>Rubble rescue</b>                                                   |
| <b>RELIABLE METHOD:</b> Two workers: twenty minutes for first survivor |
| <b>FAST OR RISKY METHOD:</b> Survivor DC 12 Athletics each action      |
| <b>FAILURE CONSEQUENCE:</b> No progress or further damage              |
| <b>PROCEDURE:</b> Rubble Rescue                                        |

## Lens Control Reference

| ACTION                  | REQUIREMENT                              | COST                                           | RESULT                                                |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Close shutter           | At S                                     | One action                                     | Stops surges; clock continues                         |
| Open shutter            | At S                                     | One action                                     | Allows observation; clock/surges resume as applicable |
| Hold bleed              | At B, shutter closed                     | Action each turn, both hands                   | Pauses clock and rupture countdown                    |
| Rig bleed               | At B, shutter closed, rope and fixed eye | Two actions                                    | Holds without operator                                |
| Seat cradle             | At C, shutter closed, bleed held         | One action                                     | Permanent safe shutdown                               |
| Start observation       | At R, shutter open, settings selected    | One action; +10 clock minutes once             | Round 1                                               |
| Continue observation    | At R                                     | One action on each next two consecutive rounds | Completed record                                      |
| Open recorder           | At R                                     | One action                                     | Drawer stays open                                     |
| Release and remove leaf | At R, drawer open                        | One action                                     | Record carried                                        |
| Break lens              | Reduce AC 13, 24 hp housing to 0         | Attacks                                        | 2d6 force pulse, DC 12 half; danger ends              |

Full procedures: **Safe Shutdown, Incorrect or Partial Operations, Conducting the Final Observation, Recovering the Record, and Deliberate Destruction.**

## Evidence Reference

| ESSENTIAL CONCLUSION                    | FIRST ROUTE      | INDEPENDENT ROUTE           | FURTHER CONFIRMATION                   |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Six people missing                      | Mara's roster    | Surveyors name colleagues   | Personal effects and sightings         |
| Both vertical routes connect levels     | Plaque and Jori  | Pell and shaft inspection   | Player route diagram after discovery   |
| Sera omitted cradle before power        | Sera's admission | Ena's account               | Archive logs and unsecured live cradle |
| Shutdown order                          | Archive diagram  | L1 strip                    | Control labels and Sera                |
| Observation: open shutter, three rounds | Sera's settings  | Recorder labels             | Progress indicators                    |
| Destruction ends danger with pulse      | Sera             | Sacrificial-support warning | One-minute housing inspection          |
| Record complete and usable              | White indicator  | Destination text            | Iven's format knowledge                |

Essential conclusions remain available after failed rolls.

## Before the Finale

Establish:

- Surveyors' actual locations: rescued, mobile, or still trapped.
- Cage supports and repair; stair debris.
- Who carries tokens and reel.
- Exact clock value.
- Lens objective and any abort condition.
- Operators at S, B, C, and R when their positions matter.
- Each construct's state and hit points.

## Preparation Checklist

- Read the DM Introduction and six encounters, including lens procedures.
- Choose party scaling before placing opponents; normal scaling has two skitters and two wardens.
- Mark the six starting surveyors and prepare the clock with minute remainder.
- Keep map geometry beside the lens reference.
- Separate all seven handouts by acquisition point.
- Agree on injury and fall descriptions.
- Distinguish loaned equipment from authorized salvage.
- Keep the three lens outcomes available: shutdown, deliberate destruction, rupture.
- Use recorded states on return visits.

- After play, reconcile people, machinery, payments, and accepted follow-up.

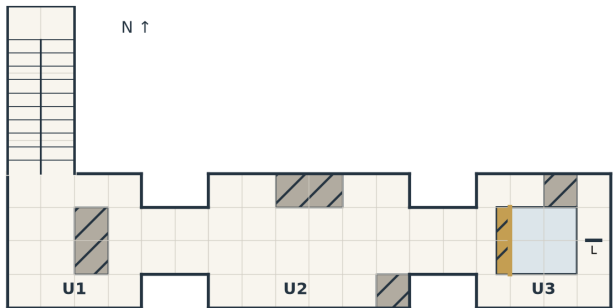
## Player Map Sheets

Share only when the party knows the layout; cover unexplored rooms as needed.

# The Last Light Below

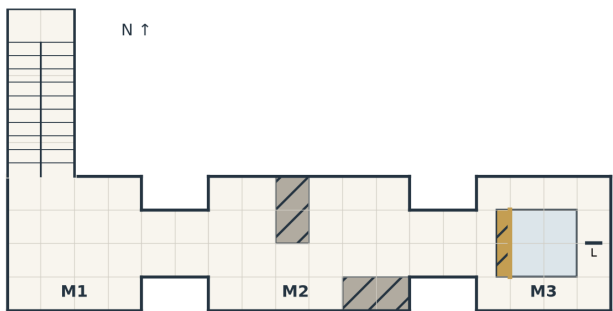
## THE LAST LIGHT BELOW

Observatory floor plans | PLAYER MAP - reveal rooms as explored



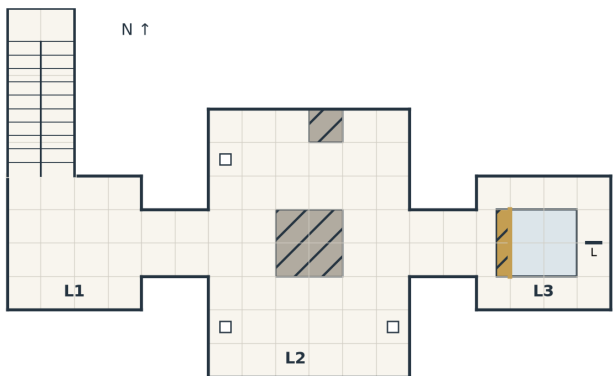
### UPPER 0 ft

- U1 Entry hall
- U2 Workshop
- U3 Hoist landing



### MIDDLE -20 ft

- M1 Stair landing
- M2 Archive
- M3 Hoist landing



### LOWER -40 ft

- L1 Vestibule
- L2 Lens chamber
- L3 Hoist landing

**GRID: 5 FEET | NORTH UP | L = SERVICE LADDER | GOLD STRIP: 2 FT SILL GAP**

Stairs: 60 ft movement per level. Hoist/ladder: 20 ft vertical per level. Surface is 20 ft above U1.

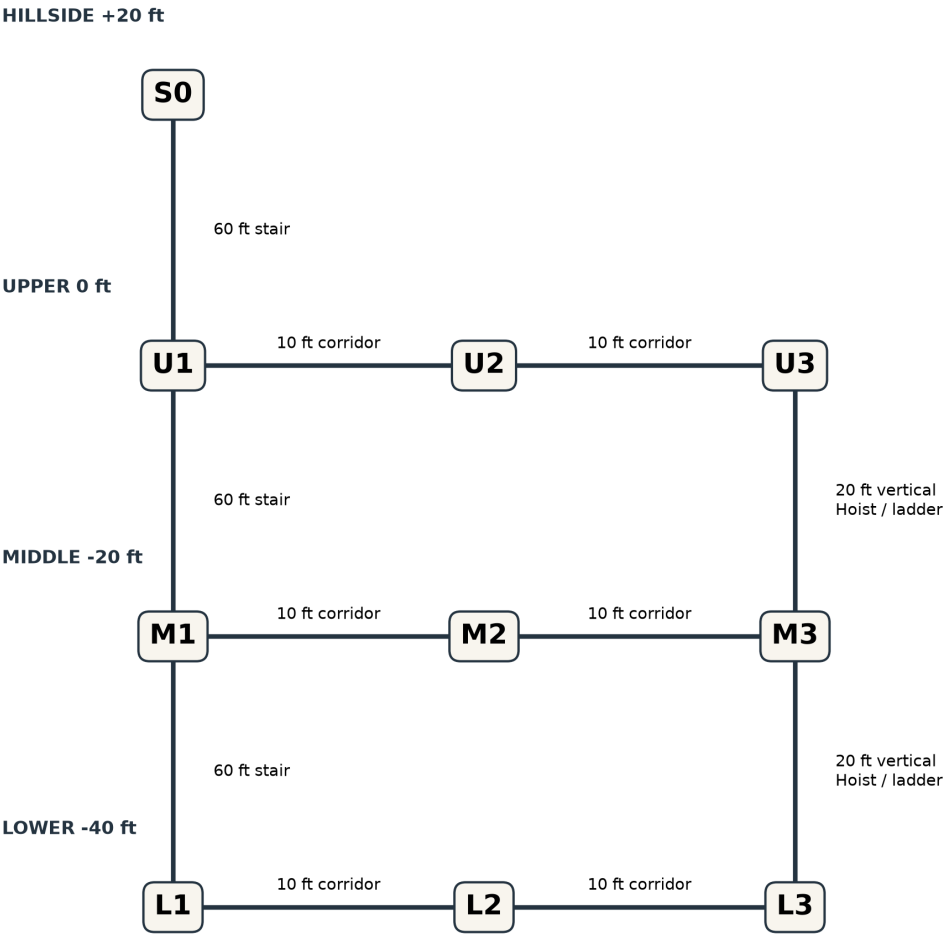
This plan records visible architecture. It does not reveal occupants, machine instructions, or future hazards.

Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.

# The Last Light Below

## THE LAST LIGHT BELOW

Routes and elevations | PLAYER MAP



SCHEMATIC - not to tactical scale. Horizontal labels measure the connecting corridors only.  
Complete route allowances: 1 minute between adjacent rooms; 2 minutes between levels.  
Stair flights and turning landings cost 60 feet of movement per level change.  
Share this map after Jori, Pell, or the survey sketch establishes the route network.

Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.

## Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

## Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.